

Pluralism and Moderation
In an Inclusive Political Realm:
A Normative Defence of
Religious Political Parties

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PhD Politics
University of Edinburgh
2009

Signed Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that it is my own work. I also declare that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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24 February 2010

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I outline the normative relevance of religious political parties as carriers of values in the context of contemporary political theory. The central argument of my thesis is that religious political parties are, in ideal terms, vital institutional tools for channelling religious claims into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities, in a way that favours democracy. The reason for my claim is that there is a set of normative criteria that all political parties ought to comply with. These include loyal opposition (i.e. the endorsement of the constitutional and institutional framework in which parties operate), acknowledgement and respect of political pluralism and commitment to pursuing power only through legal means. These normative criteria are grounded in the idea that political parties are “bilingual”, i.e. they occupy a unique position between civil society and public political realm. By complying with these criteria political parties can contribute in channelling and moderating religious and other perfectionist claims in a way that renders them suitable for democratic politics. Furthermore I argue that religious political parties are best incorporated, in ideal terms, by a regime of non-constitutional pluralism, where no religious faith is officially recognized in the constitution but the political guarantees exist for the expression of religious views in the public political realm through religious political parties. Finally, I examine two specific religious parties, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) in Turkey and the former Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana* - DC) in Italy, in order to assess to which extent they have complied with the normative criteria of party politics and, therefore, contributed in enhancing democracy in their respective polities.

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Introduction

In March 2008, Turkey's Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya asked Turkey's Constitutional Court to close down the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) and to ban 71 senior AKP administrators from politics for five years. The AKP, according to the prosecutor, had been guilty of pursuing anti-secular activities. These included some controversial statements released to the press by party members, as well as provisions supposedly implemented such as an alcohol ban (that was overturned by the Council of State) and the construction of gender-segregated parks. Furthermore, in the 2007 the AKP had passed a bill lifting the headscarf ban in all universities, thus contravening Article 17 of the Higher Education Law.¹

While members of the secular Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP) moderately endorsed the prosecutor's indictment, eminent members of the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* - MHP) and pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* - DTP) (as well as, obviously, of the AKP itself) raised their protests against the lawsuit, accusing it of seriously undermining Turkey's democracy. If the indictment had succeeded, the AKP would have been the 25th political party to be banned by the Constitutional Court since its establishment in 1963 and it would have followed the fate of its two forerunners, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP) and the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* - FP), both banned by the Constitutional Court in 1997 and 2001 respectively. Eventually the Court announced its verdict on 30 July 2008. The AKP was found guilty of anti-secular activities but was not disbanded, due to the lack of the qualified majority (of seven out of eleven votes) necessary for this provision to be implemented. Yet the Court halved the public funding destined to the AKP.²

¹ *Today's Zaman*, "Closure case against ruling party creates shockwaves", 15 March 2008 [online]. Available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=136476> [accessed 29 June 2009].

² *Hurriyet*, "Turkey's court decides not to close AKP, urges unity and compromise", 30 July 2008 [online]. Available at: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/home/9547882.asp?gid=244&sz=29614> [accessed 29 June 2009].

The AKP indictment case certainly exposes some of the main flaws of Turkey's democracy and of its constitutional charter. However, it also raises a set of normative questions which are independent from the specific Turkish context. More specifically, are there any normative criteria all political parties ought to comply with? In which cases is the banning of political parties justified? Are religious parties not especially likely to become hegemonic, and therefore to represent a danger for liberal democratic polities? Most importantly, should religious claims be allowed into the public political realm of these polities, via religious parties? These are only some of the issues which inevitably arise when considering the AKP indictment case. Yet providing satisfactory answers to them requires going beyond a merely empirical account and shifting instead to the level of normative political theory. More precisely, it requires disclosing what normative criteria political parties, and religious political parties in particular, ought to comply with when they channel comprehensive conceptions of the good, such as religious ones, into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities.

Political theory's silence about party politics has only recently been broken by the systematic and pioneering work of Nancy L. Rosenblum.³ Yet political parties intuitively appear as central to any normative analysis of democratic politics, pluralism, and the promotion of comprehensive conceptions of the good within the public realm. Within liberal democratic polities, parties normally shape the political debate both before and after elections, and they are the channels through which citizens pursue public office. Moreover, they convey sets of values condensed in their manifestoes and then translate them into policy proposals. Furthermore, parties help to select and organize the multitude of interests and demands which arise from civil society, rendering them suitable for political deliberation and decision-making.

³ Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), pp.23-53; "Partisan Faith", prepared for "Multiculturalism and the Antidiscrimination Principle", Tel Aviv, December (2005) [online]. Available at: <http://www.rg-law.ac.il/conference05/articles/nancy.pdf> [accessed 4 June 2008]; "Glorious Traditions of Anti-Partyism and Moments of Appreciations", Lecture 1, "On the Side of the Angels", The Storr Lectures at Yale Law School, Spring (2006) [online]. Available at: http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~nrosenbl/Storrs_Lecture1.pdf [accessed 4 June 2008]; Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Political Liberalism vs. 'The Great Game of Politics': The Politics of Political Liberalism", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.4, No.1, March (2006), pp.99-108.

Most importantly, political parties are, in ideal terms, the institutional expressions of political pluralism. They are *parts* (from the Latin *partiri*, “divide into parts”)⁴ and therefore they are incompatible with political monism, i.e. the idea that a perfectionist state can only endorse and promote one conception of the good. The idea of political monism may lead to the mistaken conclusion that, if the state is a “bearer of ideals”, it can only respect and accept one political party, i.e. the party which supports the ethical system the state endorses.⁵ Nevertheless, party politics is also incompatible with political neutrality, i.e. the idea that the state should refrain from the promotion of any comprehensive conception of the good life. Although a neutral state “respects all moral systems and all ideals, and therefore all the parties which defend them”,⁶ it may often prevent the channelling of comprehensive views into the public political realm, thus jeopardizing what I shall claim to be parties’ most fundamental function.⁷

In establishing which regime would be most suitable in allowing the ideal presence of political parties, then, the alternative should not merely be between a perfectionist/monistic political regime and a neutral/pluralistic one. Indeed, as Maurice Duverger highlights, the connection between a perfectionist state and a single-party regime is not straightforward. Duverger notes how “certain single parties have arisen in neutral states which did not claim to be ‘bearers of ideals’: for example in Turkey”⁸ and how a plurality of parties could in principle have arisen also within perfectionist states, such as the Soviet Union where, he observes, “the rivalry between heavy and light industry might very well have become a party struggle, if the powers that be had desired it”.⁹ By admitting that, at least in principle, there might have been a multi-party system even within a totalitarian (i.e. strongly perfectionist and monistic) regime such as the Soviet Union, Duverger therefore

⁴ *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (translated from the French by Barbara and Robert North) (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd; New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1959), p.262. For an early analysis of single-party regimes, see Mihaïl Manoilescu, *Le Parti Unique* (Paris: Les Oeuvres Françaises, 1936).

⁶ Duverger, *Political Parties*, p.263.

⁷ I will extensively analyse this aspect in chapter 2.

⁸ Duverger, *Political Parties*, p.263. I will extensively analyse Turkey’s public philosophy in chapter 10, emphasizing its non-neutral, strongly perfectionist laicist character.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.263.

acknowledges the fact that not even a strongly perfectionist state may be able to prevent the emergence of a plurality of views and their institutionalization through party politics. As noted by Nancy Rosenblum, “[w]ith political organizations and especially partisanship, the ‘fact of pluralism’ is made concrete for democratic purposes”.¹⁰

The alternative, therefore, should not merely be between a perfectionist/monistic regime, where the state only promotes one conception of the good, and a neutral/pluralistic one, where the state respects all values and conceptions of the good but prevents them from entering the public political realm. A third way is available: pluralistic perfectionism, i.e. the idea that there are several values and conceptions of the good and that the state may promote many of them at the same time, or at least allow them to enter the public political realm through the channelling agency of political parties.¹¹ This is therefore the sphere in which, I contend, political parties have a role of great value.

In the light of these general considerations, I intend to supply a rationale for religious political parties: they are carriers of (religious) conceptions of the good into the public political sphere. I aim to explain why religious political parties matter in normative political theory and why I believe they can help to convey religious views into the political realm while at the same time respecting the principles of pluralism, democracy and political moderation. My analysis therefore aims to proceed beyond the existing literature on secularism, religion and politics. That literature does not take into account the normative and institutional significance of religious parties when addressing the relationship between political and religious realms.¹² Moreover, this thesis also aims to build on the limited existing theoretical literature on political parties, by drawing out the significance of at least one of several potential avenues of research in this unexplored area of normative political theory.

¹⁰ Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.24.

¹¹ See Simon Caney, “Anti-perfectionism and Rawlsian Liberalism”, *Political Studies*, Vol.43, No.2, June (1995), p.256.

¹² See chapter 7.

Central Argument and Structure of the Thesis

This work is conceived as an exercise in analytical normative political theory, seeking to trace and scrutinize chains of argumentation from premises to conclusions, and to assess the coherence of the overall theoretical structure. Doing so is likely to include disclosing and clarifying underlying assumptions, evaluating the robustness of argumentative moves, situating the theory and its elements within relevant debates, and contextualizing the theoretical stakes in real world terms. The central argument of my thesis is that religious political parties are, in ideal terms, valuable institutional tools for channelling religious claims into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities, in a way that favours democracy. The reason for my claim is that there is a set of normative criteria all political parties ought to comply with. These include loyal opposition (i.e. the endorsement of the constitutional and institutional framework in which parties operate), acknowledgement and respect of political pluralism and commitment to pursuing power only through legal means. These normative criteria, I will explain, are grounded in the idea that political parties are “bilingual”, i.e. they represent an institutional and “quasi-official” link between civil society and public political realm¹³ and “connect particular interests with general principles”.¹⁴ By complying with these criteria political parties preserve their bilingualism and can therefore contribute in channelling and moderating religious and other perfectionist claims in a way that renders them suitable for democratic politics.

Furthermore, I argue that the inclusive public political realm necessary for the pluralistic perfectionism conveyed by political parties (and by religious parties more specifically) to be feasible ought to be guaranteed by a procedural model of deliberative democracy grounded in pragmatist epistemology. Political parties, including religious ones, mirror the features and normative requirements of pragmatist deliberation.¹⁵ Translated into terms of religious governance, religious political parties are best incorporated, in ideal terms, by a regime of constitutional

¹³ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. ‘The Great Game of Politics’: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.104.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.104.

¹⁵ See chapter 6.

non-establishment, where no religious faith is officially recognized in the constitution but political guarantees exist for the expression of religious views in the public political realm through religious political parties.¹⁶

Having devised a normative conception of religious parties, and explained which ideal institutional framework best allows their presence and functioning, I then apply my theoretical and normative findings to two specific religious parties, the AKP in Turkey and the former *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in Italy. I assess whether these two parties, and the institutional frameworks of religious governance in which they have operated, conform to the ideal of religious party politics that I endorse, and whether they have therefore contributed in enhancing democracy in their respective polities.

Before examining religious parties, though, in the first part of the thesis I provide a more general theoretical and normative account of political parties broadly intended, so as to justify my view that religious party politics can imply the moderation and democratization of religious values when these are conveyed (by religious parties) into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities. In the first chapter of the thesis, I therefore set out an ideal conception of political parties and the normative criteria that stem from it. My account is grounded in the idea that political parties are “bilingual”, i.e. they represent an institutional and “quasi-official” link between civil society and public political realm¹⁷ and “connect particular interests with general principles”.¹⁸ I also provide a brief account of the history (and pre-history) of the term “party” in order to show how my normative account of party politics reflects the way parties have come to be understood since they first appeared on the political stage of Western polities.

In the second chapter I examine an emblematic model of political neutrality, namely John Rawls’s theory of political liberalism,¹⁹ and reject it as a suitable ideal

¹⁶ See chapter 9.

¹⁷ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. ‘The Great Game of Politics’: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.104.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.104.

¹⁹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press,

framework for political parties carrying comprehensive conceptions of the good. By highlighting the non-neutral foundations and the expansive conception of public reason which characterize Rawls's theory, I argue that political liberalism is potentially hostile to the presence of religious political parties. In the third chapter I analyse the utopian character of totalitarianism and its connection with ethical monism, assessing their relation with my ideal conception of political parties. By drawing on the work of Isaiah Berlin²⁰ and George Crowder,²¹ I emphasize some of the implications of value pluralism for party politics, focusing especially on the distinction between value pluralism and Rawls's conception of reasonable disagreement. In this way, I intend to reject monistic perfectionism and highlight that the state promotion of substantive values does not entail the imposition of a single conception of the good upon society. On the contrary, by emphasizing the utopian nature of both ethical and political monism, I aim to show that perfectionist politics does in fact involve the promotion of a plurality of conceptions of the good and that party politics represents its clearest expression.

In the second part of the thesis I focus on the limits and constraints which ought to be imposed upon political parties within liberal democratic polities and on the relationship between political parties and democratic deliberation. In the fourth chapter I investigate the normative grounds for the imposition of institutional constraints upon party politics and for the banning of political parties, especially focusing on antidemocratic and anti-system parties. Yet I argue that, although these parties ought in principle to be banned, as they contravene the normative criteria of party politics, there might sometimes be stronger normative reasons why they should be accepted within liberal democratic polities.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, I advance an account of "deliberative perfectionism" and provide a theoretical defence of a model of democratic deliberation grounded in pragmatist epistemology. By analysing the work of Jürgen Habermas,²² George

2005a).

²⁰ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* (edited by Henry Hardy) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.166-217.

²¹ George Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism* (London, New York: Continuum, 2002).

²² Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, (translated from the German by William Rehg)

Sher²³ and Cheryl Misak,²⁴ I unveil the normative links between perfectionism, pluralism and democracy. I then argue that parties are an indispensable resource for democratic deliberation and that the normative role of political parties can be best understood on the basis of a model of democratic deliberation grounded in pragmatist epistemology. By establishing an intrinsic connection between truth, inquiry and experience, I argue, pragmatism provides the rationale for a democratic deliberation which mirrors some of the normative criteria of party politics, i.e. parties' requirement to submit their views to the trial of elections and, consequently, to present, assess and modify their policy proposals before other parties and the public. Furthermore, this model offers normative grounds for endorsing an inclusive conception of the public political sphere, permeable to comprehensive conceptions of the good (including religious ones). This pragmatist theory of deliberative perfectionism, applied to political parties, represents the focal point of my thesis and provides the link between the first and third parts.

In the third part of the thesis I shift to a closer examination of religious political parties as they provide, I believe, the most evident example of perfectionist partisan agency. Religious parties convey religious conceptions of the good into the public political realm and, in normative terms, they ought to abide by the rules and limits imposed by the institutional and constitutional framework within which they operate. In the seventh chapter, I examine recent debates in contemporary political theory concerning the idea of public reason and the role of religious arguments in the public political forum. While endorsing the idea of a more inclusive public sphere than the one advocated by political liberals, I argue that religious political parties, by complying with the normative criteria of party politics, can be vital in providing an institutional and normative channel for an inclusive but critically checked public deliberation. In this way, they can channel and moderate religious claims in a way that favours democracy.

(Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996a); "Three Normative Models of Democracy", in S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996b), pp.21-30.

²³ George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000).

In the eighth and ninth chapter, I examine various ideal institutional models of church-state relations and critically assess their implications for a normative theory of religious political parties. I argue that Veit Bader's²⁵ model of non-constitutional pluralism (NOCOP) provides, in ideal terms, the most suitable framework for the presence of religious political parties. Yet I also claim that NOCOP is normatively justified and institutionally feasible only if religious political parties, intended as the institutional vehicles of the pragmatist model of deliberative perfectionism that I defend in the fifth and sixth chapters, are placed at its core.

In the fourth and final part of the thesis, I move on to analyse two moderate religious political parties, the AKP in Turkey and the DC in Italy. My purpose is to assess whether these two parties have conformed to my normative ideal of religious party and, consequently, whether they have contributed in channelling religious claims into the public political realm in a way that favours democracy. In the tenth chapter I argue that the AKP has so far abided by the normative criteria of party politics and therefore preserved its bilingualism and contributed in enhancing democracy in Turkey. This distinguishes it from its Islamist forerunners and especially from the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP). On these grounds, I argue, the AKP ought not to be banned. I also argue that Turkey's current regime of religious governance, which I define as “monistic and top-down laicism”, ought to be replaced by a form of non-constitutional pluralism in line with the ideal model that I have endorsed in the ninth chapter. This kind of institutional arrangement would be more hospitable to religious political parties.

The AKP has often been compared to Western European Christian Democratic parties, due to the moderation with which it promotes policies grounded in religious values.²⁶ In the eleventh chapter, I therefore examine a specific Christian Democratic party, the former *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in Italy. I claim that the Italian DC displayed a lower degree of compliance (than the AKP) with the normative criteria

²⁵ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

²⁶ William Hale, “Christian Democracy and the JDP: Parallels and Contrasts”, in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), pp.66-87.

of party politics. It gradually became entangled with Italy's state apparatus and therefore partly jeopardized its bilingualism and the possibility of being a democratic channel for religious claims into the public political realm. The DC also failed to promote the reform of Italy's regime of almost religious establishment, sanctioned by the 1929 Concordat between the Fascist regime and the Catholic Church and subsequently incorporated into the 1948 republican Constitution. The DC ought to have called for the disestablishment of Catholicism, and for its replacement with a regime of non-constitutional pluralism which would have been more suitable, in ideal terms, to its religious partisan identity and to religious party pluralism. Instead the DC failed to challenge that institutional framework and, even when the latter was partly reformed in the 1980's, becoming in principle more inclusive towards religious pluralism, the DC was unable to redefine its identity in a way fully consistent with the normative criteria of party politics and with party bilingualism. Therefore, even though the DC, like most Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe, played a crucial role in integrating Catholic citizens into liberal democratic politics, it contributed in preserving an institutional framework hostile to a plurality of religious faiths and parties and, therefore, it failed to fully exploit the democratic potential of religious party politics.

Part I

Political Parties, Monism and Pluralism

Chapter 1 - What is a Party and What Ought It to Do? Setting Out the Conceptual and Normative Framework

Political parties are voluntary organizations which place candidates in elections in order to obtain control of government. This minimalist definition is commonly endorsed in the literature on party politics. Anthony Downs, for example, defines “party” as “a coalition of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by legal means”¹ whereas Leon D. Epstein depicts a party as “any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect government officeholders under a given label”.² John Aldrich characterizes political parties as “coalitions of elites to capture and use political office”.³ Finally, according to Giovanni Sartori, a party is “any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections...candidates for public office”.⁴

A minimalist and broad definition of political parties, such as the one that I have just provided, is able to accommodate the variety of parties which we might encounter in the real world. Indeed very different kinds of organizations are commonly defined as “political parties”. The Nazi and Fascist parties which gained power in Germany and Italy after World War I (WWI) and established totalitarian regimes are quite different, for example, from the Labour Party in contemporary Britain or the former Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano* - PCI) in Italy. Green parties, Christian Democratic Parties, nationalist and separatist parties are also normally considered examples of “political parties”, despite their different ideologies, aims and internal organizations. Only a sufficiently broad definition, like the one that I provided above in line with the existing literature on party politics, may therefore be able to justify considering such diverse organizations “political parties”.

¹ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp.24-5.

² Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980), p.9.

³ John Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.19.

⁴ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.63. For a summary of definitions of “party” see John Kenneth White, “What is a Political Party?”, in Richard S. Katz and Williams Crotty, *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: SAGE, 2006), p.6.

Within this broad category, if we look at the political landscape of Western liberal democratic polities, we encounter political parties which display very different levels of commitment to liberal democratic values or to pluralism. Most political parties operating within Western countries endorse the liberal democratic values which lay the foundations for the constitutional and institutional frameworks of these polities. Some parties, however, invoke discrimination towards certain categories of citizens (e.g. blacks, gays etc.). Others might even use democratic politics in order to achieve power and dismantle democratic institutions and party pluralism from within, although there are fewer examples of such parties nowadays. I will look in more detail at the problems these parties raise in the fourth chapter. For now it suffices to say that, under the label “party”, as commonly intended in the literature, we can find a very broad variety of organizations. These might be more or less compatible, within Western liberal democratic polities, with the liberal democratic foundations of the regimes in which they operate.

The presence of allegedly undemocratic parties often raises important questions in democratic regimes. It is often debated, for example, whether such parties should be banned or whether they should be welcomed into the democratic political process. These normative questions, however, cannot be answered from within the limits of the empirical literature on party politics. Certainly empirical grounds might sometimes be crucial for justifying the implementation of normative principles (e.g. we should *prove* that a party pursues an antidemocratic agenda before banning it on the basis of certain normative grounds). However, the justification itself for either including or excluding certain parties from democratic politics must rely on normative foundations.

For these reasons, I intend to provide a normative account of political parties in order to show why parties can be good for democratic regimes and to establish whether those parties which do not commit to democratic principles should be excluded from democratic politics. As I suggested in the introduction, the relevance of political parties for normative political theory stems from their being carriers of comprehensive conceptions of the good into the public political realm. Parties are

“‘bilingual’...they connect particular interests with general principles”.⁵ They are neither mere associations nor state institutions. Instead, they are located halfway between civil society and public political realm and they provide a unique, hybrid and semi-institutional connection between the two domains. On the one hand, therefore, they foster specific values and policy proposals, grounded in their political platforms. On the other hand, they do not act in isolation but within the broader constitutional and institutional frameworks of the regimes in which they operate. These features render them unique.

The bilingualism of political parties also emerges from the specific way in which they channel societal claims into the public political realm. Parties politicize citizens’ demands, values and interests by enacting both a quantitative and qualitative selection. On the one hand, they select a limited number of issues (among the plurality of demands arising from civil society) which deserve political attention, and synthesize them through party manifestoes and party programmes, therefore setting the political agenda for the broader public. On the other hand, they re-shape such values, interests and demands in political terms, i.e. they translate them into specific political platforms and policy proposals with the aim of implementing them if and when they achieve control of political power. The translation of societal claims into political ones is the unique contribution that parties can provide thanks to their bilingual and hybrid nature.

Parties, unlike single-issue groups, are “wide-ranging agenda-setting”⁶ organizations. While being expressions of particularistic conceptions of the good, they relate them to the broad range of policy areas and long-term political issues that the government of a modern nation-state normally involves. Parties, moreover, do not simply mirror pre-existing societal interests and demands. Instead, they are “opportunistic responses to political possibilities”.⁷ Social cleavages, that is, do not necessarily

⁵ Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. ‘The Great Game of Politics’: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.4, No.1, March (2006), p.104.

⁶ Nancy Rosenblum, “Political Parties as Membership Groups”, *Columbia Law Review*, Vol.100 (2000), p.825.

⁷ Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.103.

translate into political parties; “[s]ome one has to politicize events, to define their political relevance in terms of a choice between or among parties”.⁸ Parties, therefore, draw the lines of divisions which are politically relevant and they choose how to reframe societal demands in relation to a broader political agenda and in opposition to their political adversaries. In this way, parties articulate and crucially simplify political debate, placing citizens before a more straightforward set of options and rendering their electoral choices easier to make.⁹

Parties are therefore “channels of expression...They are an instrument, or an agency, for *representing* the people by *expressing* their demands”.¹⁰ Rather than merely communicating citizens’ opinions, parties “provide for something that no poll or machine can supply: They transmit demands *backed by pressure*. The party throws its own weight into the demands it feels compelled to respond to”.¹¹ Parties may also shape, manipulate and somehow distort public opinion.¹² However, despite being a “two-way communication channel”,¹³ they function more as bottom-up expressing channels than as top-down manipulative bodies.¹⁴ They therefore provide citizens with a specific channelling agency that no other institutional or non-institutional body can offer, as they are the only organizations able to enhance citizens’ demands with a semi-institutional sway, thanks to their intermediate position between civil society and public political realm.

Given the bilingual nature of party politics, I would like to provide an ideal characterization of political parties which I will rely on throughout my thesis and which might help to address the normative questions discussed in the introduction, i.e. why parties can be good for democratic politics and whether certain parties ought to be banned from it. My central claim is that, in order to remain bilingual, parties ought to maintain a balance between particular and general principles, partiality and

⁸ Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), p.183.

⁹ See Rosenblum, “Political Parties as Membership Groups”, pp.825-826.

¹⁰ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹² For this point, see Sigmund Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p.397.

¹³ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29.

unity. Parties, that is, ought to express “loyal opposition”¹⁵ and “regulated rivalry”,¹⁶ i.e. they ought to promote particular values and interests while, at the same time, acknowledging and respecting the whole of which they are parts and the other parts within it. In Western liberal democratic polities, for example, political parties act within institutional frameworks characterized by multi-party systems and democratic electoral politics. Due to their bilingualism, therefore, they ought to acknowledge and respect the liberal democratic frameworks in which they operate, while promoting their particularistic views. This also implies that political parties ought to seek power only through the legal channels established by the framework in which they operate. In liberal democratic polities, therefore, they ought to seek control of government only through democratic elections, rather than by using violent means (e.g. terrorism, war etc.).¹⁷ On the same grounds, parties also ought to be ready and willing to be voted out of office via legal means. They ought to accept, that is, the provisional nature of political authority.

At the beginning of the present chapter I explained how the pursuit of political power through elections is the feature highlighted by virtually all definitions of political parties. However, we might sometimes encounter parties which do not even comply with this minimal criterion of party politics, e.g. revolutionary parties. It is therefore important, in the present normative analysis, to highlight that commitment to electoral trial, in liberal democratic polities (and in all those polities in which elections represent the legal route to government), should be grounded in the idea of loyal opposition which characterizes my ideal account of political parties. Only in this way can electoral commitment acquire normative relevance for this study. Consequently, for example, revolutionary parties which aim to obtain power, within liberal democratic polities, by using violent means, infringe the normative criteria of party politics that I am presenting here.

On the basis of the analysis conducted so far, therefore, a party ought to behave

¹⁵ John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*, edited by Erin Kelly (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.49.

¹⁶ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. ‘The Great Game of Politics’: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.105.

¹⁷ Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, pp.24-5.

neither as a monistic body identifiable with the state nor as a faction, which is “only a part for itself”.¹⁸ Either behaviour would jeopardize party bilingualism. On the one hand, parties ought to remain “parts” and, therefore, they ought to acknowledge and respect party pluralism, i.e. the presence of other parties, alongside them, within the polity in which they operate. Indeed, by ceasing to be parts, and aiming to identify themselves with the whole in which they operate (e.g. by eliminating party pluralism), parties would crucially undermine their bilingualism and become undistinguishable from the state. They would no longer provide the intermediate channels between civil society and state, particularistic idioms and a common institutional and political language. Parties, therefore, ought to acknowledge party pluralism in order to remain bilingual. In ideal terms, party bilingualism could not even be conceived without party pluralism.

On the other hand, while being channels of particularistic conceptions of the good, parties ought to behave as “parts-of-a-whole”.¹⁹ Their partiality ought not to be absolute, and therefore factional, but related to the whole of the polity in which they operate. Parties, that is, ought to take “a *non-partial* approach to the whole”.²⁰ Parties, therefore, ought to constantly balance “partisanship and impartial governing, loyalty to the party and loyalty to the state, party interest and general interest”.²¹ Only in this way can parties avoid the risk of running into two opposite tendencies: factionalism, if they behave like mere parts unrelated to the whole, and unitarism, if they attempt to identify themselves with the whole. The ideal meaning of party politics is in this permanent tension between plurality and unity, partiality and wholeness, i.e. the contrasting tendencies that parties ought to constantly keep in balance.

In order to remain parts, parties also ought not to forego the comprehensive conceptions of the good of which they are political expressions. Renouncing the channelling of perfectionist views would undermine a party’s bilingualism by eliminating its particularistic idiom. Consequently, the party would only be able to

¹⁸ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.25.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.25.

²⁰ Ibid., p.26 (*italics in original*).

²¹ Ibid., p.65.

speak the common political language shared by all parties, without being able to put forward a specific message able to distinguish it from other parties. These are the kinds of features which may characterize, for example, so-called “catch-all parties”.²² Such parties present a general and indeterminate programmatic core, as well as the lack (or almost) of an a priori selection of issues and policy positions.²³ Instead of an ideology, they provide a mere indeterminate “meeting ground for the elaboration of concrete action for a multiplicity of interest groups”.²⁴ Catch-all parties, therefore, forego their particularistic idiom and, consequently, jeopardize their bilingualism. Their specific language becomes undistinguishable from the common language that they share with other parties. Therefore they might no longer be able to provide a source of political integration for individual citizens.²⁵ They might risk being assimilated into the institutional framework which should in theory only provide the common ground for their action. This infringement of party bilingualism is even stronger in the case of “cartel parties”, i.e. those “colluding parties [that] become agents of the State and employ the resources of the State to ensure their own collective survival”.²⁶ Both catch-all and cartel parties, therefore, infringe an important normative criterion of party politics.

The loss of its particularistic idiom may therefore represent, for a party, the loss of its unique bilingualism. Yet, unlike the other normative criteria of party politics that I am presenting here, it does not warrant in itself the banning of a party. It may certainly provide an argument for invoking an internal reform of the party but, unlike the other criteria, it does not have immediate effects on the polity and on the other parties. The lack of loyal opposition, respect of pluralism and use of legal means to pursue power certainly bear direct consequences on both the polity and the other parties within it. As well as undermining a party’s bilingualism, therefore, they constitute a threat that may warrant the exclusion of any party which does not

²² Otto Kirchheimer, “The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems”, in Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp.177-200.

²³ Ibid., p.198.

²⁴ Ibid., p.197.

²⁵ Ibid., p.199.

²⁶ Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party”, *Party Politics*, Vol.1, No.1 (1995), p.5.

comply with them from the public political realm. Instead, a party's decision to relinquish its specific perfectionist claim(s) only has consequences for the party in question and for its constituency. As long as the party maintains respect for the other criteria (e.g. by not attempting to subvert the existing institutional framework or to eliminate party pluralism etc.), there are no reasons for excluding it from the public political realm (although there are reasons for condemning its behaviour on normative grounds).

For parties to be able to comply with the normative criteria presented here there must already be a "consensus at the community level and on fundamentals - and especially on the rules for resolving conflicts".²⁷ Only this would allow parties to conflict over specific policies and to be "a subdivision compatible with unity rather than a division that disrupts it".²⁸ In other words, an institutional and constitutional framework (i.e. the "whole") must already be settled for party bilingualism to be feasible.²⁹ A conflict concerning the underlying values of a political system would only allow the presence of monolingual factions, speaking the sole idioms of particularistic, self-referential interests and values. This also implies that such a framework ought to be impartial. If it was grounded in partial values and demands, it would cease to be a whole and it would identify with one of its parts.

The balancing act that parties ought to perform, in the presence of an established and impartial political settlement, would result in the emergence of a "pluralistic unanimity",³⁰ i.e. the coexistence of a unitary political framework and a plurality of parties pursuing particular goals without threatening the fundamental values and institutions of the framework itself. This is what happens, most of the time, in the real world. As I suggested earlier, in Western liberal democratic countries most political parties display a bilingual political agency. They both promote partial views and recognize the legitimacy of the framework in which they operate. Some parties, however, participate in democratic party politics while invoking, more or less openly, the demise of that framework. Some pursue, for example, separatist aims,

²⁷ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.16.

²⁸ Ibid., p.16.

²⁹ Ibid., p.16.

³⁰ Ibid., p.16.

therefore threatening the political and geographical unity of the polity. Others might aim to achieve power through the legal route of party politics, rhetorically endorsing liberal democratic principles, with the objective of dismantling democracy itself from within once they are in power. These kinds of parties, several examples of which I will present in the fourth chapter, do not entirely conform to the normative criteria of party politics that I have illustrated so far.

Such criteria help therefore to develop an ideal conception of political parties, characterized by an ideally balanced bilingualism and establishing how parties ought to behave in the real world. Real parties might conform more or less to this ideal conception. It is the degree of such conformity which may help us to establish whether certain real-world parties are good for democratic politics or whether, in certain circumstances, they should be excluded from it. If intended in the ideal sense that I have illustrated here, however, political parties defy the critique that party politics inevitably reinforces divisions within plural societies, thus jeopardizing political unity and stability, as parties “do not just reflect but also create lines of division”.³¹ Parties, unlike factions, ought to conceive and promote divisions in order to foster collective benefits. Only this would allow them to preserve their unique bilingual identity. Parties which comply with these ideal criteria, therefore, can have a positive role in democratic politics. By introducing new cleavages and lines of divisions, they can encourage citizens to endorse values and policy preferences while acknowledging the presence (and the constraints) of a common institutional and constitutional framework. In other words, party cleavages thus intended can in effect promote, rather than jeopardize, political and social stability and unity, once a political framework is already in place.

The analysis conducted so far might therefore help us to understand better the normative dimension of party politics. My ideal conception of parties, entailing loyal opposition and regulated rivalry, use of legal means for obtaining power and acknowledgment and respect of pluralism, helps us to establish how parties, as we commonly intend them in everyday politics, ought to behave. The normative criteria

³¹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.62.

stemming from the idea of party bilingualism imply that political parties ought to refrain from both factionalism and unitarism, and that they ought to accept pluralism and recognize the political framework in which they operate. By complying with these ideal criteria, parties can therefore provide an important contribution to democratic politics. Indeed, values and interests which, at the pre-political and pre-partisan levels, are intransigent and divisive, acquire a novel meaning when conveyed by political parties which comply with the normative criteria that I have presented here. They may become respectful both of the common institutional framework (the “whole”) in which parties (the “parts”) operate and of the other parties within that framework. By setting these normative criteria, we might be able to assess with more clarity which parties, if any, ought to be excluded from democratic politics. This is a task that I will pursue in the fourth chapter. Now I would like instead to show why the ideal conception of parties that I have presented here is neither unusual nor implausible. In the next section I will therefore illustrate how this conception, grounded in the unique bilingual nature of party politics, echoes the way parties gradually came to be understood after they first appeared on the political arena in the Western world.

What is a Party? A Historical Background

The use of the word “party” became widespread throughout Europe during the 18th century. Parties were initially considered analogous to factions in that they expressed “divisions around ideas or personal interests which threatened peaceful government”.³² Among the main exponents of that initial anti-partisan trend, Lord Bolingbroke was the first to clearly assert that “governing by party...must always end in the government of a faction...Party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties”.³³ As Sartori notes, however, although Bolingbroke often uses “party” and “faction” interchangeably, other times he emphasizes how the latter term denotes personal interests to which the common, national interest is subordinated whereas the former indicates a “real difference of principles and designs”.³⁴ Despite this

³² Susan E. Scarrow, “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Political Parties: The Unwanted Emergence of Party-Based Politics”, in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, p.17.

³³ Henry Saint-John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *The Idea of a Patriot King* [1738], in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, Vol.II (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), p.401.

³⁴ Bolingbroke, *A Dissertation Upon Parties* [1733-1734], in *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, Letter

distinction, however, Bolingbroke's aim remained to "reconcile parties and to abolish odious distinctions".³⁵

The two main aspects of Bolingbroke's analysis, namely the distinction (still in embryonic form) between parties and factions, and the purpose of overcoming partisan divisions, are also highlighted by David Hume. Hume emphasizes how "to abolish all distinctions of party may not be practicable, perhaps not desirable in a free government".³⁶ However, like Bolingbroke, he believes that it would be wise to abolish all those partisan divisions "entertaining opposite views with regard to the essentials of government".³⁷ Hume distinguishes parties grounded in religious principles, that he considers "the most cruel factions that ever arose from interest and ambitions",³⁸ from those arising from political principles, which represent a lesser threat to the unity of a state.³⁹

Despite its negative consideration of partisan divisions, the Humean account paved the way for Edmund Burke's innovative analysis of parties which was to be greatly influential in the two subsequent centuries. As well as emphasizing, like Hume, the inevitable pluralism of views emerging from free thought, Burke especially stresses the importance of "connections in politics" as "essentially necessary for the full performance of our public duty"⁴⁰ and as the best way to "easily and speedily communicate the alarm of any evil design".⁴¹ Yet it is important to note that "Burke's advantage was to write almost a century after the 1688-1689 settlement, that is, when both the religious and the constitutional crises had clearly been resolved".⁴² As I explained in the previous section, the bilingualism of party politics presupposes "peace under a constitutional rule, not an internal war investing, among

V, Vol. II, p.11.

³⁵ Ibid., p.21.

³⁶ David Hume, *Of the Coalition of Parties* [1752], in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Vol.III (Edinburgh: Adam Black and William Tait, 1826), p.538

³⁷ Ibid., p.538.

³⁸ Hume, *Of Parties in General* [1742], in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Vol.III, p.59.

³⁹ Ibid., p.65.

⁴⁰ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontent* [1770], in *The Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. I (Boston: Little Brown, 1839), p.421.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.421.

⁴² Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.10.

other things, the very establishment of a constitution”.⁴³ Thanks to the presence of a constitutional agreement in England, Burke was therefore able, for the first time, to conceive parties, in ideal terms, as vehicles through which different views could be advanced regarding how constitutional principles should be implemented.⁴⁴ For the first time, that is, the idea of party bilingualism emerged in all its novelty and strength. Loyal opposition and “regulated rivalry”⁴⁵ began to define the normative dimension of party politics, establishing the ideal goals that, if sought by parties, would enable them to preserve their specific bilingual nature and remain distinct from mere factions.⁴⁶

Burke’s original view, which was rendered plausible by the presence of a constitutional settlement, probably also reflected deeper changes which had already characterized the history of Western political thought during the 17th century. Since the times of the Athenian democracy and of the Roman Republic it had been constant, among political thinkers, the idea that the political community could only be conceived as a unified political body, analogous to a human body, which the presence of factions could only undermine. The political body could only be healthy, in this conception, if each part performed its function and pursued its specific goals in order to promote the common good.⁴⁷ This conception was radically rebuffed, for the first time, by Thomas Hobbes.⁴⁸ Hobbes still conceived the body politic as *resembling* a natural body, an organic whole. However, he crucially intended it as an *artificial* body, created by its subjects for their own preservation. Within the body politic, each subject would remain readily identifiable as an individual.

This new conception, which provided the foundations of the modern contractualist view of the body politic, became widespread in England after 1660, i.e. just before the Glorious Revolution which helped to establish the constitutional settlement on which Burke’s conception of parties relied. Hobbes, for the first time, introduced the

⁴³ Ibid., p.11.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁴⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.119.

⁴⁶ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.10.

⁴⁷ Terence Ball, “Party”, in Terence Ball, James Farr and Russell L. Hanson (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.159-164.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.165-166.

idea that the body politic could be made of parts (or “parties”) which might disagree with each other while living together according to a common rule, without threatening the unity and stability of the whole. In the previous, organic conception of the body politic, any division would have been considered factional, i.e. disrupting of the whole. In the new one, the principle of loyal opposition, as well as that of pluralistic unanimity, became for the first time conceivable in ideal terms.⁴⁹ Both the vocabulary and the “necessary stock of images, in which anything like the modern notion of party could be conceived”⁵⁰ developed as a result of these deep changes in the history of political thought. The Hobbesian revolution, preceding Burke’s work by more than a century, provided therefore important theoretical and normative grounds for the gradual acceptance of political parties.

Burke’s conception of political parties, reflecting party bilingualism and establishing loyal opposition and regulated rivalry as the ideal goals of party politics, was not immediately understood and endorsed. The outbreak of the French Revolution especially contributed in delaying its widespread acceptance. The Rousseauian roots of the Revolution, as well as its emphasis on reason and individualism, led one of its main exponents, Louis de Saint-Just, to stress that “in dividing a people factions replace liberty with the fury of partisanship”.⁵¹ Even in the newborn United States, despite the presence of a political and constitutional unity, James Madison considered both factions and parties as “adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community”.⁵² Nevertheless, Madison also acknowledged, to some extent, the distinction between factions and parties and the latter’s capacity to impose a qualitative shift upon pre-existing societal cleavages.⁵³ Yet he regarded this shift as entirely negative. Parties, in his view, would likely exasperate rather than moderate divisions.⁵⁴ According to Rosenblum,

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.165-166.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.158.

⁵¹ Louis de Saint-Just, quoted in Mario A. Cattaneo, *Il Partito Politico nel Pensiero dell’Illuminismo e della Rivoluzione Francese* (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1964), p.96, quoted in Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.11.

⁵² Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist: a Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution, as Agreed Upon by the Federal Convention, September 17, 1787* (New York: Printed and sold by J. and A. M’Lean, no. 41, Hanover Square, 1788), p.54.

⁵³ See Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.69.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.69.

Madison belongs to a tradition of antipartyism which, while acknowledging social and political pluralism, rejects political parties as they “impede balance or harmony among recognized social parts”⁵⁵ and result in “fatal divisiveness”.⁵⁶ The politicization of societal demands, in this conception, is seen as the radicalization of their divisiveness. Madison’s anti-partisan and anti-factional thoughts were also echoed by George Washington⁵⁷ and Thomas Jefferson.⁵⁸

Due to this widespread “anti-party” climate in Britain, France and in the United States, it took several decades before an ideal conception of parties, intended as bilingual carriers of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry, and the normative criteria stemming from it, would become widely accepted. Yet this is how we have come to understand parties in contemporary democracies. Few would deny parties’ unique bilingual nature, i.e. their being different from mere associations and from state institutions. Furthermore, we normally disapprove of parties which aim for the dismantling of democratic institutions, or which aim to eliminate party pluralism and achieve full control of the state, thus establishing totalitarian regimes. Parties are normally accepted on the condition that they maintain a fine balance between their particularistic and holistic drives, i.e. that they remain bilingual. The normative criteria of party politics are grounded in the idea (and in the ideal) of party bilingualism.

By looking at the history (and, to some extent, at the “prehistory”) of the idea of “party”, therefore, I have tried to show that my ideal conception of political party, on which I ground my normative analysis, is not unusual or meaningless. Ideal parties abide by the principles of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry. They pursue political power only through legal means, e.g. through elections rather than violent means. Furthermore, they acknowledge party pluralism while respecting the constitutional and institutional framework in which they act. These are, therefore, the criteria real parties ought to abide by in order to remain bilingual. By complying with them, parties operating within liberal democratic regimes can contribute in

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.60.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.60.

⁵⁷ George Washington’s “Farewell Address”, quoted in Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.12.

⁵⁸ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.12.

enhancing democratic politics. Furthermore, these criteria might help us to decide which parties ought to be excluded from democratic politics. I will examine the former task in chapters five and six, whereas I will engage with the latter problem in the fourth chapter.

Defining Religious Political Parties

Having provided an ideal characterization of political parties, establishing the normative criteria of party politics, I am now going to illustrate the implications of this account for religious political parties. First of all, however, a definition of religious parties is required. They can be defined, in very minimalistic terms, as parties which channel religious claims into the public political realm and only ground their policy proposals in religious values. A slightly more articulated definition is provided by Nancy Rosenblum, who defines religious parties as political parties which “appeal to voters on religious grounds and draw their inspiration from religious values if not theology”.⁵⁹ As for my general definition of political parties (i.e. voluntary organizations which place candidates in elections in order to obtain control of government) also this definition of religious parties is intentionally minimalistic and broad. A great number of parties can therefore be included under this label.

Indeed religious political identity ranges “from partisanship aimed at influencing public policy in ways that serve the essentials of ‘the faith’ or ‘faith’ to political activity aimed at demonstrating that religion is the vital underpinning of political order rightly understood, including liberal democracy”.⁶⁰ Religious parties may be inspired by religious values to different degrees and in order to support very different kinds of political frameworks. On one side of the spectrum, we find those extremist religious parties, more common in new (and often fragile) democratic polities, which aim to replace democracy with a theocratic government.⁶¹ These kinds of fundamentalist parties represent extreme examples of religious party politics and, apart from a few exceptions (e.g. the fundamentalist Calvinist Dutch Political

⁵⁹ Nancy L. Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.25.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.26.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.24-25.

Reformed Party [*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* – SGP]), they are not very common within liberal democratic polities. Indeed “‘integralism’ (the view that values and practices in every sphere must be religious and congruent) is not an essential defining characteristic of religious politics. Religious politics is not necessarily preoccupied with the romantic attempt to eliminate tension and alienation”.⁶² Religious political parties, therefore, cannot be identified merely with those integralist parties which only represent extreme examples of religious political identity.

On the other side of the spectrum, we find denominational mass parties (e.g. Christian Democratic ones), mostly operating within Western liberal democratic polities. These parties do not normally constitute a problem for liberal democracy and they are more often concerned with the representation of religious citizens and religious demands, rather than with the attempt to impose a holistic religious worldview upon society. Moreover, sometimes their major goal is to protect the religious sphere of life from the coercive authority of the state, rather than to impose a theocratic government.⁶³ In this way, religious parties often aim to guarantee, especially within strongly secular polities, the “self-protection”⁶⁴ of religious faiths against anti-religious policies or, more generally, against “the omnipresence of laws, regulations, subsidies and inducements that touch on every aspect of religious life”.⁶⁵ Paolo Pombeni, for example, highlights how the original goal of Christian Democracy in Western Europe “was not so much to fashion a new explanation (and perhaps a new organization) of public space as to move a cultural community (in this case a religious community) towards a new organization of public space hostile to it”.⁶⁶

This important function of religious parties in Western liberal democratic polities relies on the view that religious values play an essential role in the lives of religious

⁶² Ibid., p.25.

⁶³ Ibid., p.25.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.25.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.26.

⁶⁶ Paolo Pombeni, “The ideology of Christian Democracy”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol.5, No.3 (2000), p.291.

believers and that therefore “[f]aith cannot be privatized. Believers should not be treated as ‘second class citizens’”.⁶⁷

An important implication of my definition of religious parties is that, in order to qualify as “religious”, a political party must ground its manifesto and policies in religious views, even when such policies (e.g. bans on abortion, funding of religious schools etc.) can be defended without appeal to religious values. Its endorsement of such policies, that is, must rely on religious values. There might certainly be non-religious reasons (e.g. utilitarian, liberal etc.), for example, for opposing the legalization of abortion or endorsing the funding of religious schools. Religious parties, however, are those which ultimately appeal to religious reasons when supporting these provisions. They “invoke the sacred roots and reasons for authority and institutions, and argue that public ideals may be defended more persuasively and obligations motivated more dependably on religious than secular grounds”.⁶⁸ This is a crucial aspect of religious partisan identity and distinguishes religious parties from other kinds of parties (e.g. conservative, liberal etc.). It may also help us to understand why religious parties do not find much normative and institutional space in those contemporary political theories (e.g. political liberalism) which tend to relegate religious values and reasons to the private realm and argue that public ideals ought to be justified on political, not comprehensive grounds. In the second chapter, I will show how John Rawls’s political liberalism is not hospitable, in ideal terms, to religious parties as I define them here.

Certainly it might be unlikely to find political parties which ground all their policy proposals in religious arguments all the time. Indeed, as highlighted by Jeff Spinner-Halev in his analysis of religious conservatism, while “some political positions taken by religious conservatives do have clear biblical roots [e.g. the injunction against homosexuality]”,⁶⁹ in many other cases religious conservatives clearly appeal to secular grounds (e.g. opinion poll surveys, social science, scientific arguments etc.)

⁶⁷ Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.26.

⁶⁹ Jeff Spinner-Halev (2000) *Surviving Diversity. Religion and Democratic Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p.147.

in order to sustain their political views. For example, “those sceptical of evolution do not just talk about Genesis, but about gaps in the fossil record”.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as in this example, their religious and political views are likely to be so entangled that “[f]undamentalists (and other religious conservatives)...will not be able to separate the sacred and secular aspects of their beliefs easily”.⁷¹ This kind of entanglement is what religious parties must display, in order to qualify as “religious”.

My account requires a final clarification. The requirement that parties must exclusively appeal to religious values, as normative grounds for their policies, in order to count as “religious” parties, does not mean that they can only appeal to fundamentalist religious values. As I have already explained, my minimalistic definition of religious political party includes both fundamentalist religious parties, on the one hand, and denominational mass parties, on the other hand. All parties within this broad range must ultimately ground their policies in religious values, in order to qualify as “religious”, whether their policies aim to establish a theocratic regime or, for example, to provide public funding for religious schools within liberal democratic regimes. Religious parties, that is, believe that “religion is the vital underpinning of political order rightly understood, including liberal democracy.”⁷² The exclusive appeal to religious values can in principle provide the normative grounds for both theocratic and liberal democratic politics.

The minimalistic definition provided here is therefore able to include a broad variety of religious parties, ranging from religious fundamentalist parties to Western Christian Democratic parties. It accommodates, for example, both the SGP and the Italian People’s Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano* – PPI) in pre-Fascist Italy which, while not being confessional party, was “inspired by Christian idealism”.⁷³ The same could be argued of all Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe. The basic principles of Christian Democracy (e.g. personalism, subsidiarity and federalism) are

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.153.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.155.

⁷² Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.26.

⁷³ Ibid., p.25.

deeply grounded in Christian doctrine and Catholic social teaching.⁷⁴ Most importantly, “without the basis of Christianity a true form of Christian Democracy could not develop”.⁷⁵ We can still find this Christian inspiration in contemporary Christian Democratic parties. Indeed if we look at the Basic Programme of the European People’s Party (EPP), a transnational European party which comprises Christian Democratic parties from EU member states as well as associate and observer members from non-EU states, we can still find the link between political and policy positions and religious values.⁷⁶ The EPP’s programme emphasizes “the link...between...Christian values based on the Gospel and Christian cultural heritage and...the democratic ideals of freedom, fundamental equality between men, social justice and solidarity”.⁷⁷ This kind of loose reference to religious values and “Christian idealism”,⁷⁸ which characterizes Christian Democratic parties, is sufficient for considering these parties religious, according to the broad definition provided here.

The Normative Dimension of Religious Party Politics

The analysis conducted in the previous section aimed to provide a broad definition of “religious party”. However, as in the case of parties generally intended, also in the case of religious parties we require, beside a minimalistic and inclusive definition, a normative characterization. This ought to be grounded in the normative criteria of party politics which, as I explained in the first chapter, stem from the unique bilingual nature of political parties. Like other parties, religious parties are bilingual, i.e. they are placed halfway between state and civil society and therefore “they connect particular interests with general principles”.⁷⁹ Religious parties relate religious comprehensive views to the political framework in which they operate.

⁷⁴ See Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁷⁵ Luigi Sturzo, “The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy”, *The Review of Politics*, Vol.9, No. 1, January (1947), p.6.

⁷⁶ David Hanley, *Beyond the Nation State: Parties in the Era of European Integration* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.51.

⁷⁷ European People’s Party, *Basic Programme adopted by the IXth EPP Congress*, Athens, November 1992, paragraph 163 [online]. Available at: http://www.epp.eu/dbimages/pdf/athene_BASIC_PROGRAM.pdf [accessed 5 January 2010].

⁷⁸ Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.25.

⁷⁹ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. ‘The Great Game of Politics’: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.104.

They are neither mere associations, entirely placed within civil society, nor state institutions. Therefore, in order to remain bilingual, they ought to display loyal opposition and regulated rivalry, as well as recognizing “that they are ‘parts’ of an overarching system and that the elimination of others is neither possible nor desirable”.⁸⁰ They ought to respect party pluralism, including both religious and non-religious parties.

On the basis of the analysis conducted in this chapter it might be argued that, in ideal terms, the decision to enter party politics “signals a minimal effort to cast goals in terms that apply beyond themselves, to argue that what is good for the group is also a public good”.⁸¹ By complying with the normative criteria of party politics, religious political parties (but also non-religious ones) can play a very beneficial role within liberal democratic polities and provide “an affirmation of the democratic structure of civil authority and democratic procedures”.⁸² Participation in party politics can also have a formative effect upon religious citizens and religious groups, originating a process of “democratic acculturation”.⁸³ This is a merely empirical statement, which should be kept separate from the normative argument that I am developing here. Yet there is some empirical evidence that, by accepting to participate in democratic party politics, religious faiths have often moderated their beliefs and adjusted them to democracy. Eldon Eisenach, for example, highlights how in American political history each religious faith has, “*in the very process of accepting the invitation* [to enter democratic politics], modified its own self-understandings and the way it presents its beliefs to its own members and to the larger community”.⁸⁴ Similarly, confessional parties which operated in Western Europe between the end of the 19th century and World War II (WWII), and which originally endorsed holistic religious views, “eventually relaxed their antipluralist, antipolitical ambitions, and...were integrated into the political systems they loathed and had intended to subvert”.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.41.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.41.

⁸² Ibid., p.41.

⁸³ Ibid., p.41.

⁸⁴ Eldon Eisenach, *The Next Religious Establishment: National Identity and Political Theology in Post-Protestant America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp.40-41 (italics in original).

⁸⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.42. See also Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in*

The moderating function of party politics is linked to the creative agency of parties that I highlighted at the beginning of the present chapter. I explained that parties do not automatically arise from societal cleavages but actively draw the lines of political division. When we look at religious parties, this implies rejecting the view “that individuals become partisans by way of their membership in social, religious or cultural groups”.⁸⁶ There is not a deterministic link, that is, between religious identity and religious political identity. In the case of Christian Democratic parties in 19th century Western Europe, for example, “lay political leaders took a religious identity that in respect to democratic politics was neutral or hostile, and characterized the religious community in a way that came to include political identity conducive to democratic participation via the confessional party”.⁸⁷ Choosing not to develop a religious political identity in order to participate to democratic politics, and to remain instead anchored to one’s holistic religious worldview, may involve “high costs in a religiously pluralistic and democratic society. Self-distancing removes the religious community, its institutions and ideas, from participation in the larger spiritual and intellectual life of the nation and, through that, of one’s own time”.⁸⁸ Therefore, even though the potential moderating effect of democratic participation is a merely empirical matter, we can at least say that exclusion from it, either chosen by religious groups or imposed by a secularist or anti-religious state, might have serious implications in pluralistic liberal democracies. As well as marginalizing religious groups, it might also jeopardize the stability and unity of the polity, by leaving it subject to stronger factionalist drives.

Within liberal democratic polities, the process of democratic acculturation favoured by religious parties might contribute in educating their members to present and implement perfectionist policies with a more moderate and compromising attitude in the public political realm. This thesis does not aim, however, to assess the potential moderating effects of democracy upon political parties. Its central claim, instead, is purely normative: those parties (both religious and non-religious) which, within liberal democratic polities, comply with the normative ideal of party politics that I

Europe.

⁸⁶ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.345.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.345-346.

⁸⁸ Eisenach, *The Next Religious Establishment*, p.41.

have presented here, and which therefore preserve their bilingualism, provide a vital instrument for channelling religious claims into the public political realm in a way that favours democracy.

AKP and DC: Two Case Studies

It might be argued that the presence of the two aspects of religious partisan identity that I have illustrated earlier, i.e. the positive link between the party's programmatic core and its underlying religious values, and the negative self-protective attitude towards all-encompassing secular regimes, are present in different measures and combinations in different religious parties. Of the two case studies that I will consider in the final section of the thesis, for example, the AKP can still be placed on the negative side of the spectrum, being still actively engaged in rendering Turkey's public political sphere more open to religious values and demands. The AKP's call for the deprivatization of religion, accompanied by the critique of an all-encompassing secular state undermining religious expression at all levels, warrants the inclusion of the AKP among religious political parties as they have been defined here. The religious identity of the AKP, however, also emerges from the fact that the party is "deeply involved in Islamic social ethics and cultural norms, and stresses the religious values and interests of its pious electorate".⁸⁹

The other party that I will examine in the final part of the thesis, i.e. the Italian former DC, instead, can more clearly be identified with the positive link between Christian and Catholic values and political action, in line with Sturzo's account of Christian Democracy. Indeed, the founding document of the DC stated that "only the spirit of fraternity carried and alimented by the Gospel can save peoples from the catastrophe to which totalitarian myths may conduct them".⁹⁰ Tolerance, freedom and other values broadly endorsed within Western liberal democracies were therefore seen by the DC as stemming from fundamental Christian and Catholic values. The link between DC's ideology and Catholic religion also emerges from another of the

⁸⁹ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.8.

⁹⁰ My translation of "solo lo spirito di fraternità portato e alimentato dal vangelo può salvare i popoli dalla catastrofe a cui li conducono i miti totalitari" [Alcide De Gasperi (alias Demofilo), "Idee Ricostruttive della Democrazia Cristiana" [1943], *Appunti*, Vol.32, March-April (1981), p.77].

party's early programmatic documents.⁹¹ Having highlighted that the DC mainly comprised of Catholic believers, the document emphasizes how the Catholic citizen who enters the party “does not change belief...[or] sever the umbilical cord which bonds him to...the Church, but in fact he continues to draw from the Christian heritage the vital ferment that also in the public life must preserve and aliment him”.⁹² Yet we can also find, in these early documents, the DC's willingness to ensure that post-Fascist Italy would be inclusive towards Catholicism in the public political realm. According to Alcide De Gasperi (first secretary of the DC and author of these programmatic documents under the epithet “Demofilo”), “it is in the very interest of democracy that such a Christian yeast should ferment in all social life, and that the spiritual mission of the Catholic Church be carried out in full freedom”.⁹³ The DC, at least initially, had to fight in order to ensure that the constitutional and institutional framework of the new Italian state, emerging from WWII, would not be hostile to the public role of Catholic citizens. I will explain in the last chapter how the debate concerning the recognition of Catholicism as state religion in the 1948 republican constitution represented the turning point in the relationship between DC, Catholic Church and Italian state.

Both AKP and DC, then, can be considered religious parties on the basis of the definition that I provided in the previous section. However, I would like to clarify better, before concluding this chapter, the reasons why I have chosen them as case studies to assess the applicability of my normative theory of religious parties. Both DC and AKP are located on the more moderate side of the religious party politics spectrum. Neither is a fundamentalist religious party. Although their policies and manifestoes have been influenced by religious faith in a very loose sense, in both cases we can trace their political platforms back to religious values, either Christian or Islamic. One might perhaps argue that it would have been more useful, for a

⁹¹ Alcide De Gasperi (alias Demofilo), “Tradizione e Ideologia nella DC” [1944], *Appunti*, Vol.32, March-April (1981), pp.96-112.

⁹² My translation of “non muta credo, non recide il vincolo ombelicale che lo unisce alla...chiesa, ch  anzi dal patrimonio cristiano continua a trarre il fermento vitale che anche nell’attivit  pubblica lo deve conservare e alimentare” (ibid. p.103).

⁹³ My translation of “  quindi particolare interesse della democrazia che tale lievito cristiano fermenti in tutta la vita sociale, che la missione spirituale della chiesa cattolica si svolga in piena libert ” [De Gasperi (alias Demofilo), “Idee Ricostruttive della Democrazia Cristiana”, p.77].

normative analysis of the relationship between religious parties and liberal democracy, to focus on more extremist and fundamentalist religious parties. Yet, despite some exceptions (e.g. the abovementioned SGP), such parties are more common in new (and often fragile) non-Western democracies. Therefore they might be less useful for showing the positive contribution religious parties can make to the integration of religious faiths into established liberal democratic polities. Indeed I will explain how, despite some flaws, both AKP and DC have contributed in integrating religious citizens into the democratic life of their respective polities. I will also assess to which extent both AKP and DC have complied with the normative criteria of party politics that I have presented in this chapter. Finally, the analysis of DC and AKP will be crucially useful for relating my normative analysis of religious parties to a normative assessment of institutional regimes of religious governance, an aspect which is central to my work. Indeed Italy and Turkey present very different (almost conflicting) institutional regimes of religious governance, displaying very different approaches to the role of religion in the public political sphere and to religious pluralism. Examining DC and AKP will therefore allow me to relate my normative theory of party politics to a normative analysis of ideal models of religious governance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out the theoretical framework for my normative analysis of political parties in general, and religious parties in particular, by outlining the normative criteria of party politics. In the next chapter, I will examine a paradigmatic model of political neutrality, namely John Rawls's theory of political liberalism.⁹⁴ By unveiling the non-neutral foundations of Rawls's theory and its expansive conception of public reason, I will conclude that political liberalism restricts the normative and institutional space available to those political parties which convey comprehensive conceptions of the good, especially religious ones. I will therefore reject pluralistic neutrality as a suitable framework for party politics and move on, in the third chapter, to a critical assessment of monistic perfectionism.

⁹⁴ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a).

Chapter 2 – Political Parties and the Limits of Political Liberalism

In this chapter I will outline and criticize the implications of a paradigmatic model of political neutrality, i.e. John Rawls's¹ “political liberalism”, for the normative theory of political parties that I presented in the first chapter, especially for a normative theory of religious parties. The idea that political parties, broadly intended, are integral to Rawls's political liberalism, has been suggested by Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum.² They argue that parties represent an institutional and “quasi-official” link between civil society and public political realm,³ that they are “‘bilingual’...[therefore]...as agents of a publicly recognized overlapping consensus, they connect particular interests with general principles”.⁴ Having endorsed so far this conception of parties intended as bilingual agents, and having drawn my normative theory of party politics from it, in this chapter I will assess Rawls's political liberalism in order to verify whether it is sufficiently inclusive, in ideal terms, to allow the presence of parties conveying religious and other comprehensive views. I will conclude that, due to its expansive conception of public reason, political liberalism seriously limits, in ideal terms, the number and kinds of comprehensive views⁵ which may be channelled by political parties, in general, into the public political realm, and that this renders it particularly inhospitable to the presence of religious political parties.

Political Liberalism: Reasonable Pluralism and the Public Justifiability of “Justice as Fairness”

Rawls first aired his theory of political liberalism in a series of lectures and articles⁶ published throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, then more systematically in *Political*

¹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a).

² Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.4, No.1, March (2006), pp.99-108.

³ *Ibid.*, p.104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.104.

⁵ I will use the expressions “comprehensive view(s)” and “comprehensive doctrine(s)” interchangeably.

⁶ See, for example, John Rawls, “The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus”, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring (1987), pp.1-25; “The Priority of the Right and the Ideas of the Good”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.17, No.4, Autumn (1988), pp.251-276.

Liberalism.⁷ Aware of criticisms alleging the presence of substantive (liberal) assumptions in *A Theory of Justice*,⁸ Rawls gradually shifted from a comprehensive to a merely political conception of liberalism and admitted the “unrealistic idea of a well-ordered society as it appears in *Theory*”.⁹ He attributed this unfeasibility to the fact that “in *Theory* a moral doctrine of justice general in scope is not distinguished from a strictly political one. Nothing is made of the contrast between comprehensive philosophical and moral doctrines and conceptions limited to the domain of the political”.¹⁰ In this sense, political liberalism should be intended as a theory which applies only “to the basic structure of society, its main political, social, and economic institutions...independently of any wider comprehensive religious or philosophical doctrine; and...in terms of fundamental ideas viewed as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society”.¹¹ Rawls also underlines how political liberalism does not apply to matters of ordinary politics but rather to the “constitutional essentials”, that is, questions such as “who has the right to vote, or what religions are to be tolerated, or who is to be assured fair equality of opportunity, or to hold property”.¹²

The “original position”, the methodological expedient introduced by Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, in order to devise the principles of justice which should regulate society, is still viewed by Rawls as a useful device for working out a publicly justifiable conception of “justice as fairness”, consisting of two basic principles. The first maintains that “each person is to have equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all”.¹³ The second states that “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and (b) attached to

⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.

⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). For major critical accounts, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981); Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self”, *Political Theory*, Vol.12, No.1, February (1984), pp. 81-96; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.xvii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.223.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.214.

¹³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p.302.

offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity”.¹⁴ Nevertheless, both the “original position” and “justice as fairness” are now conceived as relevant only for people as citizens, that is, as members of a certain type of political community (i.e. a liberal and democratic one) of which those principles must provide the foundations. Furthermore, the original position is only adopted to articulate in a more systematic way certain ideas that Rawls considers to be implicitly shared within the public political culture of Western liberal societies. This, in Rawls’s view, represents an important condition for the public justifiability of “justice as fairness”¹⁵ but not a determinant one.¹⁶ Indeed Rawls is still driven by a deep allegiance towards the liberal political ideal and the virtues that this may foster within society,¹⁷ independently from any sociological consideration or from any “fortunate coincidence”.¹⁸

The starting point of Rawls’s analysis is his acknowledgement of the presence of a “reasonable pluralism” of comprehensive views¹⁹ in Western liberal democratic societies. This is due to “the work of free practical reason within the framework of free institutions”²⁰ and, more specifically, to what Rawls defines “the burdens of judgement”, that is, “the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgement in the ordinary course of political life”.²¹ Among these “hazards”, Rawls mentions the difficulty of assessing evidence and its weight in drawing conclusions, as well as the indeterminacy of all our concepts and the fact that our values are shaped by our personal experience. Due to the fact of reasonable pluralism, Rawls emphasizes, a “continuing shared understanding on one comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine can

¹⁴ Ibid., p.302.

¹⁵ Rawls, “The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus”, p.12.

¹⁶ Moreover, it is doubtful whether a consensus around a set of shared political principles does in fact exist within Western liberal democratic societies. See, for example, Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism: Towards a Politics of Compromise* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.50.

¹⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.157. See also Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement* (edited by Erin Kelly) (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.118.

¹⁸ Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (2nd Edition) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.184. See also Joseph Raz, “Facing Diversity: The Case of Epistemic Abstinence”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.19, No.1, Winter (1990), p.11.

¹⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.36.

²⁰ Ibid., p.37.

²¹ Ibid., p.56.

be maintained only by the oppressive use of state power”.²²

This is why, according to Rawls, a political conception of justice can legitimately regulate a political community (e.g. by providing the basic principles for its constitutional arrangement) only if it is publicly justifiable, independently from any specific comprehensive doctrine. Grounding the political conception solely upon a specific comprehensive doctrine (e.g. that endorsed by a certain religious group) would show a lack of consideration towards those citizens who do not endorse that same conception.²³ Political power, for Rawls, is therefore legitimate “only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason”.²⁴

Public justifiability is internally linked to the idea of “public reason”. This is defined by Rawls as “the reason of equal citizens who, as a collective body, exercise final and coercive power over one another in enacting laws and in amending their constitution”.²⁵ Public reason, Rawls highlights, implies that citizens “should be ready to explain the basis of their actions to one another in terms each could reasonably expect that others might endorse as consistent with their freedom and equality”.²⁶ The content of public reason, in Rawls’s view, identifies “certain basic rights, liberties, and opportunities”, attributes to them priority position “especially with respect to claims of the general good and of perfectionist values; and third, it affirms measures assuring all citizens adequate all-purpose means to make effective use of their basic liberties and opportunities”.²⁷ The basic structure of society should not be organized, according to Rawls, so as to consistently reflect the views of one sub-group that holds a comprehensive doctrine other citizens do not share.²⁸

²² Ibid., p.37. For a critique of this point see Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.161

²³ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.44.

²⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.137.

²⁵ Ibid., p.214.

²⁶ Ibid., p.218.

²⁷ Ibid., p.223.

²⁸ Ibid., p.226.

While acknowledging the presence and importance of comprehensive doctrines, Rawls relegates them to the so-called “background culture”²⁹ of civil society, the social dimension where associations, churches, families etc. exist and operate.³⁰ According to Rawls, therefore, the views endorsed by each citizen are made of two parts, namely “the publicly recognized political conception of justice...[and] a (fully or partially) comprehensive doctrine to which the political conception is in some manner related...[C]itizens individually decide...in what way the public political conception all affirm is related to their...comprehensive views”.³¹

The Narrow Scope of a Reasonable Overlapping Consensus

Rawls’s conclusion, highlighted in the previous section, raises some issues. Certainly, according to Rawls, comprehensive views and political conception of justice are different levels of the same thing (i.e. a citizen’s overall worldview). In this sense, for example, a citizen’s view regarding which religious faith(s) should be tolerated in the constitution of a polity (or, more strongly, which ones should be incorporated into its institutional framework) may just be a part of that citizen’s comprehensive (religious, non-religious or even anti-religious) view(s). However, the expression “in some manner”, that Rawls uses to describe how citizens relate the political conception to their comprehensive view(s), highlights the indeterminacy of this connection. This depends on the fact that different comprehensive doctrines may organize their various parts (including their political part) in different ways, therefore rendering it very difficult to provide a general account of how the relationship between the political conception and other parts of a comprehensive doctrine works.

Yet the specific examples (i.e. Kant’s moral philosophy, classical utilitarianism and a comprehensive pluralist theory)³² that Rawls provides in order to explain how comprehensive doctrines relate political liberalism to their other parts, seem to be ad hoc examples. Although these doctrines may be related to political liberalism, they

²⁹ Ibid., p.14.

³⁰ For the idea that liberal neutrality does allow perfectionist values and arguments into civil society, and that the real dispute is therefore between “social perfectionism” and “state perfectionism” (rather than between neutrality and perfectionism), see Will Kymlicka, “Liberal Individualism and Liberal Neutrality”, *Ethics*, Vol.99, No.4 (1989), pp.895.

³¹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.38.

³² Ibid., pp.169-170.

represent only a fraction of the comprehensive doctrines endorsed within Western liberal democratic societies.³³ Indeed, Rawls's argument does become more problematic when he focuses on the example of "religious doctrines with an account of free faith".³⁴ Such doctrines, according to Rawls, endorse the political conception as their account of free faith "lead[s] to a principle of toleration and underwrite[s] the fundamental liberties of a constitutional regime".³⁵ The account of "free faith", here highlighted by Rawls, refers to the Lockean ideas that "the understanding cannot be compelled by force to belief...[and that]...only faith and inward sincerity gain our salvation and acceptance with God".³⁶ Rawls acknowledges that "perhaps too optimistically...except for certain kinds of fundamentalism, all the main historical religions admit of such an account [i.e. of free faith] and thus may be seen as reasonable comprehensive views".³⁷ Why is Rawls thinking that he might be too optimistic? This is not a mere sociological or empirical consideration. What he is implicitly acknowledging, I suspect, is that there might not actually be a connection between the comprehensive (moral, ethical, philosophical) aspects of many religious faiths and the political (liberal) conception of justice. Moreover, his doubts are not restricted to fundamentalist views; they also concern "all the main historical religions".³⁸

Rawls's argument is that, if a religious comprehensive doctrine contains an account of free faith (i.e. if it is reasonable on Rawls's definition), then it can also include political liberalism (i.e. as one of its parts). Rawls's (perhaps unwarranted) optimism, then, seems to lie in the idea that most non-fundamentalist religious comprehensive doctrines do include such an account, and that therefore they are reasonable (i.e. on Rawls's definition). If this is the case, though, the "reasonable overlapping

³³ In this connection, see Samuel Scheffler, "The Appeal of Political Liberalism", *Ethics*, Vol.105, No.1, October (1994), p.9.

³⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.170.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.145, n.12. For Locke's idea of toleration, see John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government with A Letter on Toleration* (edited by J.W. Gough) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956).

³⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.170.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.170. For a critique of the "exclusivist" character of political liberalism see Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006a), p.88 and Susan Moller Okin, "Political Liberalism, Justice, and Gender", *Ethics*, Vol.105, No.1, October (1994), p.31.

consensus”³⁹ among plural comprehensive doctrines which, according to Rawls, is guaranteed by a freestanding political conception of justice, will be among a potentially very small set of people, excluding both non-fundamentalist and fundamentalist unreasonable religious comprehensive doctrines as well as many other unreasonable non-religious comprehensive doctrines.

This is not a merely empirical or sociological issue. The source of the problem, instead, is normative and lies in Rawls’s own definition of “reasonable” comprehensive doctrines. “The reasonable”, Rawls argues, “is an element of the idea of society as a system of fair cooperation...Reasonable persons...desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept”.⁴⁰ This definition conceals a liberal conception of the person and of society which, even if intended in a merely political (i.e. non-comprehensive) meaning, does not seem to be justified on independent grounds.⁴¹ As Mulhall and Swift state, “by defining ‘the reasonable’ as including a commitment to a politically liberal vision of society, Rawls defines anyone who queries or rejects that vision as ‘unreasonable’; but he offers no independent reason for accepting that morally-driven and question-begging definition”.⁴² Rawls’s argument, therefore, seems circular in so far as it considers reasonable only those people who endorse political liberalism (i.e. as one part of their comprehensive doctrines) and, at the same, time, only allows reasonable people within political liberalism

Rawls’s conception of reasonableness, therefore, still relies on a “metaphysical backing”,⁴³ namely a liberal one. Although his political liberalism does not aim “to settle questions of objectivity in ethics”,⁴⁴ Rawls still needs to rely on substantive foundations in order to justify why, for example, practices which have become accepted in Britain, such as the exclusion of women from all-men clubs or the

³⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.40.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.49-50.

⁴¹ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, pp.227-240

⁴² Ibid., p.238.

⁴³ Richard Bellamy and Martin Hollis, “Liberal Justice: Political and Metaphysical”, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.45, No.178, January (1995), p.14.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.13.

practice of female circumcision, ought to be considered unreasonable.⁴⁵ Unless we rely on substantive liberal grounds, we might risk reducing the problem to the question “whether a liberal view can be got to prevail in a power-game where winners are always reasonable and losers always unreasonable”.⁴⁶ However, this is not how Rawls himself conceives political liberalism. He does not argue that the political conception of justice should result from a mere pragmatic balance between different moral views present within society. This process, according to him, would be “political in the wrong way”⁴⁷ and perhaps, we might argue, not so different from the idea that “justice is what suits the strong”.⁴⁸ Instead Rawls endorses a freestanding political conception of justice in the hope that “this idea, with its index of primary goods arrived at from within, can be the focus of a reasonable overlapping consensus”.⁴⁹ However, this might remain a mere hope “without some transcendental reason why a liberal convergence should occur”.⁵⁰

Therefore, although Rawls’s account might provide the criterion for establishing which comprehensive doctrines can be parts of an overlapping consensus (i.e. those doctrines which include political liberalism as one of their parts) it excludes a priori all those doctrines which are not necessarily extremist or intolerant, but which do not contain political liberalism as one of their parts. As Rawls’s own doubts regarding religious doctrines suggest, many comprehensive doctrines might potentially fall into this category. Instead of adopting a neutral epistemological notion of “reasonableness”, Rawls loads this concept with a political liberal connotation. This renders his political liberalism circular, insofar as it excludes unreasonable views from public debate just because they are not politically liberal, and therefore less inclusive.

Political Liberalism and the Imperfect Bilingualism of Political Parties

The analysis conducted so far suggests important consequences for a normative

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.14.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.14.

⁴⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.40.

⁴⁸ Bellamy and Hollis, “Liberal Justice: Political and Metaphysical”, p.14.

⁴⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.40.

⁵⁰ Bellamy and Hollis, “Liberal Justice: Political and Metaphysical”, p.14.

account of political parties. As Muirhead and Rosenblum note, parties help “elements of civil society enter public political life”,⁵¹ they are “both associations with roots in civil society and quasi-official actors in the electoral process and in government”.⁵² Parties therefore establish a connection between the political and the non-political realms. Rather than merely “adapting” the latter to the former, they “discover and define politically relevant differences, they create the terms of contest”.⁵³ Via the semi-institutional bilingual dimension of partisan politics, individuals can foster and promote their own conceptions of the good life within the political arena. Their views are not simply channelled but also reshaped and reinterpreted by political parties.

Given their bilingualism, I argued in the first chapter, parties ought to respect the ideas of “loyal opposition”⁵⁴ and “regulated rivalry”,⁵⁵ denoting a political antagonism respectful towards constitutional principles and political adversaries. The politicization of comprehensive doctrines through party politics ought to involve the acknowledgement of the political framework in which these views are fostered and the constitutional limits within which this fostering may be enacted. By complying with the constraints and opportunities of party politics, political parties which convey comprehensive (religious, moral etc.) doctrines, especially in liberal democratic polities, can therefore channel and moderate perfectionist claims in a way that favours democracy.

Rawls’s political liberalism, however, prevents the politicization of many comprehensive doctrines (including religious ones), thus also forsaking the potential beneficial agency of religious political parties. Potentially many comprehensive doctrines are unreasonable on the basis of Rawls’s account, thus rendering the overlapping consensus feasible only among a limited number of people (and parties). Within this framework, therefore, religious political parties ought to restrict their

⁵¹ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.103.

⁵² Ibid., p.104.

⁵³ Ibid., p.103.

⁵⁴ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p.49.

⁵⁵ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.105.

political platforms to those policy positions grounded in reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and abandon instead those grounded in unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, as the latter cannot relate to political liberalism and therefore cannot be admitted into political debate. As I will show in the next section, this restriction applies to political parties in full, not only to debates concerning constitutional matters.

Rawls's political liberalism, therefore, is inhospitable to those political parties which convey (as sole or partial aspects of their political platforms) unreasonable (i.e. politically non-liberal) comprehensive doctrines, both religious and non-religious. As these doctrines can potentially be many (as Rawls's own doubts regarding religious doctrines seem to suggest), political liberalism crucially restricts the room for party politics and especially for religious partisan advocacy. The number and kinds of parties which may act as "agents of a publicly recognized overlapping consensus",⁵⁶ and as linkage bodies between non-political and political spheres, will therefore be limited. Only those parties which convey reasonable (e.g. in Rawls's restrictive meaning) comprehensive doctrines (e.g. a "utilitarian" party, a "Kantian" party etc.) can find space in Rawls's framework.

The problem, in this sense, is not that political liberalism is grounded in a comprehensive doctrine. Indeed, in order to be the focus of an overlapping consensus, it must be grounded in a number of comprehensive doctrines, i.e. all the reasonable ones. However, unreasonable doctrines are potentially many. Therefore, if parties' bilingualism implies their sharing political liberalism as a common idiom, and if political liberalism can provide an overlapping consensus only among a very limited number of comprehensive doctrines (i.e. those reasonable on Rawls's definition, and therefore already committed to political liberalism) then we are left with a very limited kind of party pluralism.

Many religious or non-religious parties which convey unreasonable comprehensive views (as defined by Rawls) would not be allowed to present their political platforms

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.104.

in the public political realm. As political liberalism, according to Rawls, is not part of the comprehensive doctrines on which their political platforms rely, such parties are excluded from the overlapping consensus invoked by Rawls. Mastering the Rawlsian common political language compels parties to choose among a very limited range of comprehensive idioms (i.e. those which include political liberalism as one of their parts), resulting in what we could define as an “imperfect bilingualism”. In a metaphorical sense, if we identify (for example) the common language as English, Rawls’s model implies that parties can only speak those idioms which belong to the same linguistic family as English (e.g. Dutch and German but not Arabic or Chinese). There might be very few bilingual parties in Rawls’s polity.

Political Parties, Stability and the Overriding Power of Political Values

Rawls argues that, once political liberalism has been recognized as publicly justifiable on neutral grounds, the problem arises of its actual applicability and stable support within a plural society where individuals pursue different conceptions of the good. According to Rawls, I have already explained, the purpose of the “freestanding political conception” that he delineates is that “with its index of primary goods arrived at from within, [it] can be the focus of a reasonable overlapping consensus”.⁵⁷ This, Rawls argues, guarantees that political values “normally outweigh whatever other values oppose them”.⁵⁸ Elsewhere Rawls claims that “most people’s political conceptions are no more than partially comprehensive” and that, as a consequence, “when conflicts do arise, the political conception has a better chance [than any comprehensive view] of sustaining itself and shaping those views to accord with its requirements”.⁵⁹ Rawls is quite ambiguous on this point. He does not clarify how the political conception is normally going to prevail over comprehensive doctrines. The expressions that he uses, such as “normally” or “better chance”, suggest that the primacy of the political conception is not inevitable. However, Rawls also seems to overlook the many real-life cases in which the political

⁵⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.40.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.155.

⁵⁹ Rawls, “The Priority of the Right and the Ideas of the Good”, pp.274-275. For a critique of this argument see Scheffler, “The Appeal of Political Liberalism”, pp.12-14 and Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Audi on Religion, Politics and Liberal Democracy”, in Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham, London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: 1997), p.163.

conception (together with the peaceful and stable society that it helps in fostering) is in fact rejected by particular individuals or groups, due to the overriding importance that certain comprehensive doctrines (religious, moral, philosophical etc.) have in their lives.⁶⁰ Rawls simply considers these doctrines unreasonable, and therefore excludes them from the overlapping consensus. However, as I have already explained, his conception of reasonableness is circular and grounded in metaphysical liberalism. Furthermore, I will explain later the negative implications of excluding unreasonable views from the public political realm and from party politics.

It is interesting, for now, to note how Rawls himself, in *Justice as Fairness*, seems to openly acknowledge the problems raised by his conception of the overlapping consensus. “Political liberalism”, he writes, “does not say that the values articulated by a political conception of justice...outweigh the transcendent values...- religious, philosophical, or moral - with which the political conception may possibly conflict. To say that would go beyond the political”.⁶¹ In another passage of *Justice as Fairness*, however, he seems to return to the idea that “with regard to the constitutional essentials and questions of basic justice, and given the existence of a reasonably well ordered constitutional regime, the...basic political values...have sufficient weight to override all other values that may normally come into conflict with them”.⁶² This shows that Rawls’s faith in the stabilizing role of the political conception of justice seems to be inconsistent throughout his later work.

Certainly, according to Rawls, political liberalism is supposed to outweigh comprehensive views only on narrowly political issues (i.e. constitutional essentials and questions of basic justice). Rawls’s aim, that is, is not to eliminate or even reduce reasonable reasonable disagreement. Yet Rawls seems to acknowledge that, in order to guarantee the “political” character of his theory, he must avoid considering the political conception of justice as always able to outweigh comprehensive doctrines when conflicts between the two arise. This, in some way, gives more consistency to Rawls’s view, being more in line with the “political” shift

⁶⁰ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.51. See also Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey, “Politics and the Public in Rawls’ Political Liberalism”, *Political Studies*, Vol.43 (1995), p.237.

⁶¹ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p.37.

⁶² Ibid., p.183.

of his theory. Yet it seems to limit considerably the efficacy of the overlapping consensus in guaranteeing stability within plural societies, even within the narrow sphere of constitutional essentials and questions of basic justice and even within the potentially limited realm of reasonable comprehensive views.

Political Parties and the Constraints of Public Reason

Despite his narrow and exclusive conception of public reason, Rawls makes a distinction between the non-political associational sphere, on the one hand, and the public political one on the other. He then argues that the limits of public reason “do not apply to our personal deliberations and reflections about political questions, or to the reasoning about them by members of associations such as churches and universities, all of which is a vital part of the background culture”.⁶³ The promotion of comprehensive views, both reasonable and unreasonable, is not restricted at this level. Substantive, communal values, according to Rawls, can legitimately be pursued and realized within families, churches, private associations etc. where only very basic principles and rights apply (e.g. right not to be tortured or not to be killed) but not the whole set of principles of justice which affect the basic structure and those issues which involve the constitutional essentials.⁶⁴

Political parties, though, exist on the borderline between political and non-political realms. They are not mere private associations, they do not belong entirely to the realm of civil society. They are bilingual “points of connection”⁶⁵ between political and non-political domains. The substantive goals and values that a party endorses and fosters are generally intended by its members as values which should shape public policy if and when the party achieves power. Parties are therefore strongly affected by the constraints of public reason which apply to the public political realm. Any restrictions to the kinds of issues which may be discussed in the public political forum, and to the comprehensive doctrines which may be advocated there, have direct implications for party politics. Rawls seems to acknowledge this aspect by arguing that, even though it does not apply to associations within civil society, “the

⁶³ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.215.

⁶⁴ See Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, pp.164-165.

⁶⁵ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.103.

ideal of public reason does hold for citizens when they engage in political advocacy in the public forum, and thus for members of political parties and for candidates in their campaigns and for other groups who support them”.⁶⁶

In order to appreciate the importance of Rawls’s statement, it is important to remember that, for Rawls, the constraints of public reason, which prevent (potentially many) unreasonable comprehensive doctrines from being advocated in the public political realm, only apply to the constitutional essentials and to questions of basic justice, not to the sphere of ordinary legislative politics.⁶⁷ As the latter is where political parties mostly operate, it seems that there might still be great space, in Rawls’s model, for political parties intended as carriers of comprehensive conceptions of the good. As long as the political debate in which they are involved does not concern constitutional matters, parties are free, it seems, to appeal only to comprehensive doctrines in fostering their policy positions.

There are three possible answers to this point. First, although Rawls still explicitly acknowledges the distinction between constitutional and ordinary politics in *Justice as Fairness*,⁶⁸ he sometimes admits that, if the limits of public reason can be shown to hold at the level of the constitutional essentials, then they may gradually be applied to less fundamental matters, that is, matters of ordinary politics.⁶⁹ In other words, Rawls does not always seem to envisage a neat boundary between the two spheres and to impose a priori limitations to the area within which the constraints of public reason ought to apply. Second, it is significant that, when he imposes the constraints of public reason upon political parties and party members, Rawls no longer specifies that such constraints only ought to apply to deliberations regarding

⁶⁶ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.215.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.214. In this sense, Rawls seems to endorse the idea, suggested by Peter de Marneffe, that “violations of legislative neutrality may be fully compatible with constitutional neutrality” [Peter De Marneffe, “Liberalism, Liberty, and Neutrality”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.19, No.3, Summer (1990), p.259].

⁶⁸ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p.91. However, for a critique of Rawls’s emphasis on the constitutional essentials at the expense of ordinary political processes see Amy Gutmann and David Thompson, “Moral Conflict and Political Consensus”, *Ethics*, Vol.101, No.1, October (1990), p.64; Michael Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self”, p.94; Charles Taylor [et al.], *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (edited and introduced by Amy Gutmann) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p.58.

⁶⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.215.

constitutional essentials. Rawls's argument, in this sense, seems to proceed on a double track. On the one hand, he suggests that the constraints of public reason only ought to apply when constitutional matters and issues involving basic justice are at stake (despite the abovementioned inconsistencies). On the other hand, when mentioning parties, his distinction between constitutional and non-constitutional matters seems to suddenly become more relaxed. The limits of public reason, Rawls argues, apply to members of political parties and to citizens who "engage in political advocacy in the public forum".⁷⁰ Yet Rawls omits the requirement that such political advocacy ought to concern constitutional or fundamental matters. He uses instead the more generic expressions "political questions" and "political advocacy".

This shows that, beside the content of deliberation (i.e. what issues are being discussed), Rawls also attributes great importance to the locus of deliberation, being it churches, families, the parliament, the constitutional court etc. This implies that, as soon as we cross a certain line (i.e. the line between private and public realms) regardless of what questions are debated, the constraints of public reason ought to apply in full. Therefore, although it is true that Rawls grants broad scope to the expression of religious and comprehensive views within the associational realm, it is also true that the constraints that he imposes upon political parties and public officials are much more stringent than might initially appear. This is due to the fact that Rawls places political parties entirely within the public political sphere and not on the borderline between political and non-political realms where they belong. Parties, for Rawls, are just appendices of the basic structure, wholly conditioned by the constraints of public reason imposed upon them in a top-down fashion. As these constraints are quite expansive and potentially prevent many unreasonable (i.e. on Rawls's definition) comprehensive doctrines from being advocated in the public political realm, this crucially limits the number and kinds of parties (including religious ones) which may legitimately exist and function in political liberalism.

Thirdly, even if we granted that the constraints of public reason, to which political parties are subjected, only apply to matters involving constitutional essentials, we

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.215.

should note that Rawls does not always set a clear borderline between constitutional and non-constitutional issues. This makes it difficult to discern when and where the limits of public reason ought to apply and it implicitly signals that constitutional essentials are often involved, directly or indirectly, when matters of ordinary politics are discussed in the public political forum. Kent Greenawalt, for example, notes how comprehensive views may often influence the understanding that different individuals have of the constitutional essentials, and that appeal to political values alone may not be sufficient for applying such fundamental principles to concrete policy issues.⁷¹ According to him, several political topics are located on the borderline between constitutional and non-constitutional spheres (e.g. the issue of surrogate motherhood contracts). Moreover, he argues, sometimes it is very difficult to decide whether certain comprehensive views count as public reasons and therefore are suitable for deliberation regarding constitutional essentials. For example, whereas religious comprehensive views certainly do not count (in his view) as public reasons, “references to religious traditions as sources of general human or particular cultural understanding”⁷² may do.

We might also argue that, as well as the borderline between constitutional and ordinary politics, also the boundary between political and non-political realms (e.g. regarding the role of the family) is sometimes quite indeterminate in Rawls’s analysis.⁷³ The continuous interaction between the two domains, combined with the one between constitutional and ordinary politics, makes it therefore very difficult to clearly delimit the area subject to the constraints of public reason. Given that parties act as bridges between political realm and background culture,⁷⁴ once we admit that the Rawlsian constraints of public reason apply (through a sort of spillover) to the latter as well, this further restricts the number and kinds of issues which may be channelled by political parties into the public political realm.

⁷¹ Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1995), p.117.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.119.

⁷³ See, for example, Okin, “Political Liberalism, Justice, and Gender”, p.27 and Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.47.

⁷⁴ Muirhead and Rosenblum, “Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism”, p.104.

If we therefore combine these lines of argument, the restriction that Rawls's political liberalism imposes upon political parties appears to be threefold. First, parties (i.e. party members, candidates etc.) ought to be fully subject to the constraints of public reason. Second, although the latter only apply to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, it is often very difficult to disentangle these from less fundamental matters (i.e. matters of ordinary legislative politics). Third, although the constraints of public reason do not in principle apply to the non-political realm of civil society, the boundary between the latter and the political sphere is often blurred in Rawls's account. This might potentially determine a spillover of the public reason constraints on to the background culture. Combined together, these critiques suggest that the range of issues about which public deliberation is subject to the constraints of public reason, therefore not allowing any exclusive reference to comprehensive conceptions of the good, is potentially very large. This would defy the central feature of religious partisan identity, i.e. the belief that "public ideals may be defended more persuasively and obligations motivated more dependably on religious than secular grounds".⁷⁵

Rawls's thick and all-encompassing conception of public reason undermines therefore the significance of political parties and the idea that "[w]ith political organizations and especially partisanship, the 'fact of pluralism' is made concrete for democratic purposes".⁷⁶ By limiting the variety of issues which may be channelled into the public political realm, Rawls's political liberalism leaves little scope for the bilingualism of political parties and, consequently, for the normative criteria that stem from it and which can produce beneficial effects within liberal democratic regimes. This might prevent the potentially moderating role of political parties which, by complying with the ideals of loyal opposition and respect of party pluralism, can re-mould societal demands and make them compatible with the constitutional principles of the polity in which they operate, e.g. a liberal democratic polity. Preventing citizens from conveying their full reasons into public deliberation may subtract unreasonable views from the criticisms that they may deserve and it

⁷⁵ Nancy Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.26.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24.

may also inhibit citizens with contrasting reasonable views from taking into account different perspectives and therefore partly revising their own positions. The result of this “is likely to be to encourage the very dogmatic attitudes Rawls wants to avoid”.⁷⁷

This is the most serious implication of Rawls’s political liberalism, both for a normative theory of party politics and, more generally, for the problem of dealing with unreasonable comprehensive views in the public political realm of liberal democratic polities. Reasonable comprehensive views, we have seen, are for Rawls those committed to a politically liberal vision of society. Among them, we saw, Rawls includes religious comprehensive doctrines with an account of free faith. A freestanding political conception of justice, according to Rawls, guarantees a “reasonable overlapping consensus”⁷⁸ among these plural comprehensive doctrines. Yet I also emphasized how potentially many comprehensive (e.g. religious) doctrines might be unreasonable in Rawls’s meaning. This implies that the reasonable overlapping consensus invoked by Rawls might potentially involve a very limited number of comprehensive doctrines.

Furthermore, I argued, Rawls does not adopt a merely epistemological notion of “reasonableness”, but loads this concept with a political liberal connotation, thus rendering his political liberalism circular insofar as it excludes unreasonable views from public debate just because they are not politically liberal. Merely to say that unreasonable comprehensive views ought to be excluded from political liberalism because they are not politically liberal sounds like a tautological and circular conclusion. Certainly reasonableness, intended in Rawls’s meaning, only entails a commitment to political liberal values, not to comprehensive liberalism. In this sense, this concept might in fact be more inclusive than I have been arguing so far. Indeed it does not involve a moral duty, for citizens who endorse religious or other perfectionist views, to embrace comprehensive liberalism but only the political requirement to justify their positions only in political terms, in those areas subject to the constraints of public reason (which, as I explained earlier, might potentially be

⁷⁷ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.59.

⁷⁸ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.40.

many).

Yet I also emphasized how many religious faiths, including mainstream non-fundamentalist ones, might be unreasonable in Rawls's terms and therefore not include political liberalism as one of their parts. Is it legitimate, we should therefore ask, to exclude such unreasonable comprehensive views from those areas of the public political realm which, directly or indirectly, are subject to the constraints of public reason in Rawls's account? More crucially, to which extent are the normative criteria of party politics different from those of political liberalism? Do they not simply impose analogous political constraints upon the promotion of perfectionist views in the public political realm?

I believe that a crucial aspect distinguishes the two sets of normative criteria. Rawls's political liberalism is a substantially exclusionary theory. According to Rawls, unreasonable views (i.e. views which cannot include political liberalism as one of their parts) ought to be excluded from those areas of the public political realm subject to the constraints of public reason. In those areas in which, for Rawls, political decisions ought to be justified only in political terms, unreasonable comprehensive views would be unable to comply with this criterion and therefore they would be excluded a priori from deliberation concerning such political decisions. At most, for Rawls, unreasonable views can be tolerated and, as they risk undermining political justice, contained "like war and disease".⁷⁹ On the contrary, the normative criteria of party politics that I have defended so far only represent the constraints comprehensive views ought to comply with once they have been introduced into the political realm by citizens who have formed political parties. This has two main implications. First, as these citizens have voluntarily decided to form a party, that provides us with stronger normative reasons for stating that they ought to abide by the normative constraints of party politics. Their explicit choice to embark in party politics (e.g. rather than in terrorist activity or interest groups advocacy) makes it legitimate to expect their compliance with the principles of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry, the commitment to pursue power only through legal means and

⁷⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.64, n.19.

the respect for pluralism.

These criteria might resemble those established by Rawls's political liberalism. However, in Rawls's account it is unclear why citizens ought to abide by the constraints of public reason when acting in the public political realm of liberal democratic polities. On the one hand, reasonable citizens, in Rawls's account, already endorse political liberalism, and therefore they do not represent a problem. As Rawls himself states, "[t]he conflicts between democracy and reasonable religious doctrines and among reasonable religious doctrines themselves are greatly mitigated and contained within the bounds of reasonable principles of justice in a constitutional democratic society".⁸⁰ Therefore, even citizens who endorse irreconcilable but reasonable comprehensive views may share a political conception of justice which may help them to resolve any conflict among each other. On the other hand, unreasonable citizens promote views which, according to Rawls, cannot include political liberalism (i.e. as one of their parts) and therefore cannot be part of a reasonable overlapping consensus. They represent "a threat to democratic institutions, since it is impossible for them to abide by a constitutional regime except as a *modus vivendi*".⁸¹ For Rawls, they represent a limit to the implementation of an ideal reasonable democratic society based on public reason.

My normative theory of party politics, instead, does not distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive views. The normative criteria of loyal opposition, respect of pluralism and commitment to legal means for obtaining power apply in the same way to all those citizens who have decided to enter party politics, regardless of the comprehensive views that they endorse. Those criteria might at first sight appear analogous to the constraints of public reason illustrated by Rawls. However, they crucially do not require citizens to only justify their policy proposals in political (i.e. non-comprehensive) terms when presenting them in the public political realm. We should remember that, as I showed earlier, the constraints of public reason ought to apply in full to political parties and party members, in Rawls's analysis, and that parties, for him, are just appendices of the state basic structure. My

⁸⁰ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.486.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.489.

account, instead, implies that even those comprehensive doctrines which do not contain political liberalism as one of their parts (e.g. religious doctrines with no account of free faith) should be welcomed into the realm of party politics.

Within my normative theory of party politics, members of parties which convey perfectionist (e.g. religious) views would therefore be allowed to present their policy proposals based only on comprehensive arguments. Nevertheless, they ought to accept the provisional character of political power and the reversibility of policy decisions, both linked to electoral politics. Within liberal democratic polities, they also ought to endorse the fundamental underlying values of the regime in which they operate, i.e. liberal democratic values. This paradoxically represents a stricter requirement than the one imposed by Rawls, who only requires reasonable people to endorse political, not comprehensive liberalism. At the same time, thought, it is not grounded in a pre-commitment to either comprehensive or political liberalism. Loyal opposition is somehow a relational normative criterion, implying that parties ought to endorse the fundamental values of the regime in which they operate, i.e. not necessarily a liberal democratic regime. It is therefore party politics itself, with its normative criteria and constraints, grounded in the unique bilingual nature of parties, which may play an important role in enhancing liberal democratic values and institutions (or whichever values underlie the constitutional and institutional framework of the specific polity in which parties operate). Furthermore, my normative theory of party politics does not aim to say anything about what citizens ought to do outside the realm of party politics. It is limited to assessing the importance of parties for liberal democracies on the basis of the normative criteria that I have devised but it does not aim to say anything about the intrinsic value of liberal democracy or the constraints citizens ought to abide by outside the realm of party politics.

My account therefore underlines the importance of political parties for fostering comprehensive views (both reasonable and unreasonable, in Rawls's terms) into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities, in a way compatible with liberal democracy itself. Although this might sound like a very conservative conception of

political parties, intending parties as defenders of the status quo, I will show in the fourth chapter how certain parties (e.g. anti-system ones) might actually play a much more innovative role within liberal democratic regimes. What I would like to stress here, however, is that Rawls crucially overlooks the important mediating role parties play in liberal democratic polities, a role grounded in their unique bilingual nature. Despite the distinction that he makes between constitutional and ordinary politics, and his attempt to distinguish between various layers of political activity, his account is substantially centred on a two-layered conception of political society, with the state on one side and civil society (i.e. the associational realm) on the other. This is one of the reasons, I believe, why he places political parties entirely within the former.

Contrary to Rawls, I believe that the bilingual nature of parties, and their intermediate position between state and civil society, can act as a filter between civil society and political realm. On the one hand, it provides an inclusive framework where all comprehensive views ought to be welcomed, however radical or extremist their might be at the pre-partisan level. On the other hand, the normative criteria of party politics allow us to decide whether such views can be allowed to become the grounds for policy decisions. By assessing whether political parties comply with the normative criteria of party politics, we would be able to decide whether the views they promote ought to be excluded from the public realm (e.g. by banning such parties) or whether they should be accepted as legitimate grounds for potential policy decisions, however reasonable or unreasonable they might be in Rawls's sense. What is crucial is that, by being inclusive in the first instance, party politics allows any comprehensive view to be openly challenged in the public political realm. When presenting their views during electoral campaigns or in the parliament, political parties ought to let them be subject to potential critiques and, eventually, to the judgement of elections. This might help in fostering a process of democratic acculturation (an empirical claim) and, more crucially, it might prevent the marginalization of such comprehensive views and their resulting radicalization and increased dogmatism. As I will extensively illustrate in the sixth chapter, parties are crucial in conveying a kind of pluralistic deliberation which helps in channelling and

moderating perfectionist views in a way compatible with democracy. I will instead deal in the fourth chapter with the problem represented by those political parties which do not openly present their views in public and have a hidden undemocratic agenda they aim to implement once they have been democratically elected.

It can therefore be argued that political parties, in Rawls's political liberalism, are ideally unable to express the plurality of comprehensive views present within society (as they are banned from conveying many of these views into the public political forum) and, consequently, unable to help in fostering dialogue and reciprocal understanding among them. This also renders the scope of Rawls's own theory self-defeating. By limiting, via the public reason restriction, what can be admitted into political debate and deliberation, political liberalism interferes with the process by which people endorsing unreasonable or "not-always reasonable" comprehensive doctrines may come into line with the overlapping consensus, and thus contribute to the self-reinforcing of political liberalism.

Public Reason and Party Manifestoes

In order to understand more clearly the implications of the constraints of public reason for religious parties, it might be worth looking at the specific issue of state support for religious schools. Rawls illustrates the situation in which one group of people within society favours state support for public education only, whereas another group endorses state support for church schools as well.⁸² The main problem in this case, according to Rawls, is not merely the presence of conflicting policy options, and of incompatible underpinning values, but rather the fact that the two groups "may come to doubt the sincerity of one another's allegiance to fundamental political values".⁸³ The solution to this problem, according to Rawls, is "for the leaders of the opposing groups to present in the public forum how their comprehensive doctrines do indeed affirm those values".⁸⁴ In other words, Rawls is not worried by the presence of divergent views (which he would explain on the basis of the burdens of judgement and of the consequent fact of reasonable pluralism) but

⁸² Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.248.

⁸³ Ibid., p.248.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.249. For this point see also John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", in John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.464.

by the instability that this may cause, where there is a lack of support for a shared political conception of justice. Therefore, the solution that he advocates aims not so much to explain the roots and the merits of the divergent views in themselves, but rather to reconcile them with the liberal political conception, making them appear as different perspectives from which political liberalism can and should be sustained.⁸⁵

In the light of Rawls's conclusions, then, it is difficult to see which and how many issues of ordinary politics would in fact not be subject to the constraints of public reason that he advocates. As Bhikhu Parekh rightly notes, "Rawls makes the basic structure of society the primary subject of justice precisely because it profoundly shapes the rights, liberties, and life-chances of its citizens".⁸⁶ Parekh underlines how religious people, within this framework, "should not speak in their native conceptual language, invoke their sincerely held beliefs, and appeal to their deeply held values. If some of them were to do so...they [would] risk being branded 'cruel and oppressive'".⁸⁷ We should remember here that religious parties, as I defined them in the first chapter, must only appeal to religious values in order to ground their policy proposals, even when the latter could be justified on non-religious grounds.

Rawls's strategy is particularly difficult to undermine as it does not openly forbid invoking comprehensive conceptions of the good in the public political realm. However, although it often seems to encourage different groups and individuals to present their comprehensive views in the public forum, this should be only insofar as these views are consistent with a political conception which has already (according to Rawls) been agreed upon. This contrasts with a truly inclusive polity where comprehensive views are genuinely advocated by each group in order to justify the proposal and implementation of certain legislative provisions, and are judged on the basis of their intrinsic merit. Also when Rawls illustrates, for example, the cases of the abolitionists and the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States, his strategy is unchanged. Quite significantly, he argues that these people "did not go against the ideal of public reason...provided they thought, or on

⁸⁵ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.57.

⁸⁶ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p.89.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.89.

reflection would have thought...that the comprehensive reasons they appealed to were required to give sufficient strength to the political conception to be subsequently realized”.⁸⁸ This confirms that, in Rawls’s view, the normative priority of the political conception involves the “highly questionable”⁸⁹ idea that any appeal to comprehensive views (religious or non-religious) should be intended and allowed only insofar as it contributes to enhancing political liberalism. Rawls seems to choose those examples which help to confirm and sustain his political liberalism, without considering alternative comprehensive views which might challenge it.⁹⁰ This excludes, above all, those comprehensive doctrines which do not include political liberalism and that therefore Rawls considers unreasonable.

Indeed another controversial case illustrated by Rawls is that of the anti-abortionist who, on the basis of her religious (or philosophical, or moral) comprehensive doctrine denies women’s right to abortion except in extreme cases. Rawls simply rules out such a position as unreasonable, or even “cruel and oppressive”⁹¹ and as not providing appropriate justificatory grounds for citizens voting in the public forum and deciding on matters of basic justice. I believe that Rawls could apply the same reasoning to many other policy issues concerning the basic structure of society. For this reason, as emphasized by Parekh, Rawls’s political liberalism is unable to accommodate the demands of cultural minorities, religious communities, indigenous people etc. who ask for differential treatment, often incompatible with the full endorsement of Rawls’s political liberalism, which is still “largely individualist, and meant to be uniformly applied throughout society”.⁹²

These considerations have further implications for political parties. Parties always convey whole sets of values, usually synthesized in their manifestoes and ideologies. Apart from some isolated cases, they are not mere vehicles for promoting single, contingent and temporary issues.⁹³ Therefore, as parties are for Rawls fully subject to

⁸⁸ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.251.

⁸⁹ Scheffler, “The Appeal of Political Liberalism”, p.17.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Frazer and Lacey, “Politics and the Public in Rawls’ Political Liberalism”, p.245.

⁹¹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp.243-244, n.32.

⁹² Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p.90.

⁹³ See Marjorie Randon Hershey, “Political Parties as Mechanisms of Social Choice”, in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, p.76 and Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of*

the constraints of public reason and mere appendices of the state basic structure,⁹⁴ and as those constraints rule out certain policy positions, because they are grounded in (what Rawls considers) unreasonable comprehensive views, this may prevent the existence itself of those parties which convey such policy positions and ground them in exclusively religious values (i.e. religious parties).

For example, a religious political party may include in its manifesto or electoral programme, among other measures, certain crucial policies such as an anti-abortion law, or public funding of religious schools and public holidays based on religious celebrations. The crucial point, as I explained in the first chapter, is that religious parties, in order to qualify as “religious”, must ground such policy proposals solely in religious principles (however broadly intended). If public reason prevents all or some of these measures from being advocated in the public political forum (and implemented through government policy), whenever the comprehensive views in which they are grounded do not include political liberalism, then it is difficult to understand what would be left of that party’s manifesto. Those issues may be so essential to the existence and aims of that party that, prevented from advocating them in the public political forum, the party would no longer have much reason to exist. Rawls could certainly highlight, in response to this critique, that such a party would not be prevented (in political liberalism) from advocating these policies, but only from advancing specifically religious arguments for them in the public sphere. As long as the party was able to present political (i.e. non-religious, non-comprehensive) arguments for sustaining them, they would be fully acceptable. Yet this raises further issues.

Due to Rawls’s expansive conceptions of public reason and reasonableness, the number of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines which may be unrelated to political liberalism is potentially very broad. This will often prevent their promoters from being able to find parallel political arguments for policy positions originally grounded in comprehensive (e.g. religious) doctrines. This imposes an unfair cognitive burden upon some citizens (i.e. those endorsing unreasonable doctrines)

Democracy (New York: Harper, 1957), pp.85-86.

⁹⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.215.

who, contrary to those endorsing comprehensive doctrines more attuned to political liberalism (i.e. reasonable doctrines such as Kantian, utilitarian etc.) may struggle to find the required political arguments for advancing their views and their policy positions in the public political realm. As Rawls's definition of reasonableness, as I explained, is circular and already loaded with a strong political liberal meaning, Rawls does not seem to provide valid and independent arguments for imposing this cognitive requirement upon (those he considers) unreasonable individuals.

Consequently, as unreasonable doctrines may include not only extremist ones (e.g. neo-Nazi, religious fundamentalist etc.) but also, for example, non-fundamentalist religious faiths (as Rawls's own doubts suggest), this renders political liberalism particularly limited in scope and inhospitable to a true and inclusive party pluralism and especially to the presence of religious political parties, or at least to those religious parties whose unreasonable comprehensive views do not contain an account of free faith. For these reasons I will defend, in the second section of my thesis, a more inclusive model of public deliberation, grounded in pragmatist epistemology and not discriminating against the epistemological and deliberative character of religious views in the public political realm. For now, it is sufficient to say that, by openly imposing the full constraints of public reason upon political parties, Rawls's political liberalism seems unable to accommodate diverse conceptions of the good and their institutionalization through a genuine party pluralism.

This defies Muirhead and Rosenblum's conclusion that "[p]olitical liberalism embraces... 'quasi-great' parties of principle committed to constitutional democracy... [which]... stand not for rival societies or regimes, but for rival interpretations of political freedom and equality".⁹⁵ According to them, political liberalism rejects "small parties", i.e. those parties which act as mere interest groups fostering particularist instances, and "great parties", i.e. those "arising from rival fundamental claims about the best regime".⁹⁶ Nevertheless, they argue, it is hospitable to those intermediate kinds of parties which display what Rawls himself

⁹⁵ Muirhead and Rosenblum, "Political Liberalism vs. "The Great Game of Politics": The Politics of Political Liberalism", pp.101-102.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.101.

defines as “loyal opposition”,⁹⁷ namely an opposition which is respectful towards constitutional principles and political adversaries. Certainly I agree with Muirhead and Rosenblum that party politics ought not to concern disagreement over the fundamental values of a polity, and over its constitutional and institutional settlement. Sometimes this happens, though, and certain parties (e.g. anti-system parties) reject the foundations of the polity in which they operate and invoke its complete renewal. These parties are on the borderline of loyal opposition and, as I will argue in the fourth chapter, they often (but not always) ought to be banned.

Parties which do comply with loyal opposition, however, are not always welcomed in Rawls’s political liberalism, as Muirhead and Rosenblum argue. As I have tried to show throughout the chapter, loyal opposition does not require that citizens participating in party politics forego merely comprehensive views when advocating certain policy proposals in the public political realm. Loyal opposition therefore does not require the exclusion of unreasonable (i.e. in Rawls’s terms) views from the public political realm. Rawls’s political liberalism in fact prevents the politicization, via political parties, not only of particularistic interests and extremist worldviews, but also of all those comprehensive conceptions of the good which are simply not consistent with the narrow scope of the Rawlsian thick and expansive idea of public reason. By being excluded from the public political realm and from the sphere subject to the normative constraints of party politics, these views risk being relegated to the margins of political life and becoming therefore a greater threat for liberal democratic polities.

Yet an important clarification must be made at this point, also to do justice to Rawls’s account. As I explained in the first chapter, in order to qualify as “religious”, a political party must ground its manifesto and policies in religious views, even when such policies (e.g. bans on abortion, funding of religious schools etc.) can be defended without appeal to religious values. It was for this reason that I decided to engage with the analysis of Rawls’s political liberalism, in order to understand to which extent it would allow this link between religious and political conceptions.

⁹⁷ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, p.49.

However, in the first chapter, I also explained that religious parties may be inspired by religious values to different degrees and in order to support very different kinds of political frameworks. The minimalistic definition of “religious party” that I provided there is very inclusive and can be applied both to fundamentalist religious parties and to denominational mass parties (e.g. Christian Democratic ones).

We could therefore argue that many religious parties (i.e. those closer to the “moderate” end of the spectrum) may actually be compatible with political liberalism. The religious comprehensive doctrines (e.g. Christian, Muslim etc.) in which their political platforms are grounded, that is, are likely to contain an account of free faith and, therefore, to be reasonable (on Rawls’s terms) and be included in Rawls’s overlapping consensus. Certainly, as I have explained throughout this chapter, Rawls’s own doubts regarding the reasonableness of both fundamentalist and main historical religions⁹⁸ (and, consequently, regarding their compatibility with political liberalism) still leaves his account open to the critique of being too exclusionary. This is a grey area in Rawls’s analysis, and perhaps one which needs to be assessed on a case by case approach. In other words, we need to examine religious views individually in order to assess whether they qualify as reasonable and, therefore, whether they can be part of the overlapping consensus. Consequently, also the religious parties which convey such views must be assessed on a case by case basis.

Nevertheless we might argue that most mainstream religious parties (e.g. Christian Democratic ones, the Islamist AKP in Turkey etc.) operating within Western liberal democratic polities normally appeal to religious doctrines which are reasonable on Rawls’s definition and therefore compatible with political liberalism. Yet this does not detract from the importance that religious parties can have within liberal democratic polities. As I explained earlier, preventing citizens with contrasting reasonable views from conveying their full reasons into public deliberation might inhibit them from taking into account different perspectives and therefore partly revising their own positions, thus resulting in dogmatic attitudes. Political parties

⁹⁸ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.170.

(including religious ones) are vital tools for sustaining this kind of inclusive and critical public deliberation. Furthermore, the present clarification still leaves unresolved the problem of dealing with those religious parties which convey unreasonable religious views and which, we should stress once again, may potentially be many. By excluding them from the overlapping consensus, Rawls's political liberalism risks subtracting them from the criticisms they may deserve. Consequently, it might also prevent them from undergoing the process of democratic acculturation that religious parties can trigger, when they comply with the normative criteria of party politics. Preventing unreasonable religious views from entering the public political realm implies that these views "may be passively tolerated rather than being subjected to the condemnation they deserve".⁹⁹ Indeed Rawls himself argues that, as they risk undermining political justice, unreasonable doctrines ought to be contained "like war and disease".¹⁰⁰

This may represent a loss not only for such parties but also for the "reasonable" parties operating within the same polity and for the polity itself. By shielding reasonable comprehensive views and constitutional consensus from the challenges and critiques unreasonable citizens and parties might raise within the public political realm, political liberalism might result in encouraging "the very dogmatic attitudes Rawls wants to avoid".¹⁰¹ Religious parties, acting as channels of the pragmatist model of deliberation that I will endorse in the fifth and sixth chapters, can contribute instead in providing a more inclusive public political realm, where all views can democratically and critically be assessed regardless of whether they are reasonable or unreasonable.

Conclusion

Rawls's political liberalism, I have argued in this chapter, is not able to fully accommodate political parties which convey religious and other perfectionist claims. This signals the partial incompatibility between party politics and state neutrality, as intended by Rawls. Yet my critique of Rawls's political liberalism in relation to

⁹⁹ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.58.

¹⁰⁰ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.64, n.19.

¹⁰¹ Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism*, p.58.

political parties (especially religious ones) does not intend to deny the need for imposing certain burdens upon party politics. Given their public role, political parties ought to always justify public policies across a variety of diverse groups and individuals, both religious and non-religious, as those policies, if implemented, are likely to affect everyone. This requires that parties acknowledge the presence of a plurality of opinions and political positions and that, given the general implications of their views for the whole of society, the burdens of justifications that they must face must be especially high. Therefore, after having examined in the next chapter the incompatibility between monistic perfectionism and party politics, and highlighted instead the link between the latter and value pluralism, in the subsequent chapters I will illustrate the legitimate limits that ought to be imposed upon the deliberative agency of political parties.

Chapter 3 – Monism, Pluralism and Political Parties

In the introduction, I highlighted and rejected the idea that, in choosing between regimes of political neutrality and political perfectionism, we would in fact have to choose between pluralistic neutrality and monistic perfectionism. Against these two alternatives, I envisaged a third one represented by pluralistic perfectionism, i.e. the idea that there are several values and conceptions of the good and that the state may allow many of them to enter the public political realm through political parties. Having therefore rejected, in the previous chapter, the suitability of political neutrality (in the emblematic form of Rawls's political liberalism) for the ideal presence and functioning of (religious) political parties, in this chapter I will reject the alternative paradigm, namely monistic perfectionism. A perfectionist state, I will argue, may only sustain a monolithic conception of the good by repressing or hiding (but at the same time implicitly acknowledging) the inevitable multiplicity of substantive (i.e. ethical, moral, religious etc.) conceptions of the good endorsed within society. In order to clarify this conclusion, I will examine totalitarianism in relation to ethical monism, by focusing on the theories of value pluralism devised by Isaiah Berlin¹ and George Crowder.²

I will not focus on the distinction, usually drawn, between totalitarianism, on the one hand, and authoritarian, dictatorial and single-party regimes, on the other.³ Instead, I will consider alternative political institutionalizations of ethical monism (e.g. single-party regimes) as different in degree, but not in quality, from totalitarian regimes. Totalitarianism, in this sense, should be seen as the ideal expression of political monism, "an ideal type to which concrete cases can only approximate, since no government can control every instance of social interaction".⁴ Examining its ideal nature will thus help me to disclose more clearly its connection with ethical monism. I will conclude the chapter by arguing that political parties provide the institutional

¹ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* (edited by Henry Hardy) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.166-217.

² George Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism* (London, New York: Continuum, 2002).

³ Hans Buchheim, *Totalitarian Rule: Its Nature and Characteristics* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press: 1968), pp. 22-23.

⁴ Stanislaw Andreski, "Is Totalitarianism a Meaningful Concept?", in William L. Kolb and Julius Gould (eds.), *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (UNESCO: 1964), p.719.

embodiment of value pluralism. Yet, I will argue, citizens participating in party politics only ought to acknowledge and respect political pluralism, not comprehensive value pluralism. This, I will conclude, renders party politics open to political parties which convey monistic comprehensive conceptions of the good, both religious and non-religious.

Totalitarianism: A Conceptual Framework

Totalitarianism can be defined as a political regime grounded in a monistic conception of the good and aiming for the total control of society.⁵ The former aspect refers to the ethical grounds of totalitarianism, the idea of “a complete ethical code in which all different human values are allotted their due place”.⁶ The totalitarian regime considers itself as the depository of the only truth and of a “closed intellectual system”,⁷ and therefore feels legitimized to enact the moral indoctrination of the people.⁸ In totalitarian regimes, political coercion is directly grounded in ethical demands⁹ and this implies a total control upon everyday life, encompassing all human activities.¹⁰

However, total control often presents an artificial character.¹¹ Totalitarian regimes, that is, do not reflect an existing ethical consensus within society. They arise from partial demands and aim to artificially construct such a consensus. Yet, as F. A. Hayek argues, they do not simply impose a unitary conception of the common good enabling the ranking of ethical values (a conception which, for Hayek, is utopian).¹² Their deeper aim is to bring people “to agree not only with the ultimate aims but also with the views about the facts and possibilities on which the particular measures are based”.¹³ For this purpose, totalitarian regimes devise pseudo-scientific theories enabling them to achieve a systematic control of factual information, functional to

⁵ Andreski, “Is Totalitarianism a Meaningful Concept?”, p.719.

⁶ F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan, 1976), p.43. See also J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Mercury Books, 1961), p. 4.

⁷ Buchheim, *Totalitarian Rule*, p.20.

⁸ Ibid., p.23.

⁹ Ibid., p.53.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.44.

¹¹ Ibid., p.13.

¹² Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, p.42.

¹³ Ibid., p.115.

the control of values.¹⁴ This process reveals one of the intrinsic contradictions of totalitarian regimes, namely their attempt to “‘plan’ or ‘organize’ the growth of mind”¹⁵ rather than allowing the interaction, dissent and spontaneity which may contribute to it.

Hans Buchheim highlights how the idea itself of a “totalitarian state”¹⁶ is a contradiction in terms. A state, he argues, represents by definition the “law-bound institutionalization of public life”¹⁷ which guarantees the limitation of political authority. Totalitarian regimes, instead, are characterized by the “unlimited...claim to control society”.¹⁸ Furthermore, Buchheim argues that totalitarian parties resemble “movements”.¹⁹ The totalitarian movement, he argues, reverses “the natural subordination of a part to the whole”.²⁰ It does not think of itself as a part among other parts, making up a whole, but rather as a “‘germ cell’ of a new element within the old whole”.²¹ Totalitarian parties, therefore, aim to impose their partial, factional will upon the old polity and see the state as a mere institutional tool for implementing their monistic ideas. In this sense, then, they contravene the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter. Parties always ought to act within the limits of the constitutional and institutional framework in which they operate. Totalitarian parties (e.g. the Nazis), instead, pursue the destruction of the existing institutional framework, if necessary through civil war. They are essentially anti-system. They may act as parties but only in an artificial, exterior sense, as “their aims lay beyond what [in ideal terms] a...political party may establish as its goal”.²²

Sigmund Neumann²³ provides an ideal and normative account of parties analogous to the one I presented in the first chapter. According to him, parties ought to pursue

¹⁴ Ibid., p.119. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), pp.468-474.

¹⁵ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, p.123.

¹⁶ Buchheim, *Totalitarian Rule*, p.96.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.96.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.96.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.90.

²⁰ Ibid., p.90.

²¹ Ibid., p.90.

²² Ibid., p.91.

²³ Sigmund Neumann, *Permanent Revolution: Totalitarianism in the Age of International Civil War* (London and Dunmow: Pall Mall Press, 1965), p.118.

their specific interests while acting within a common whole and recognizing themselves as parts of that whole. Furthermore, he argues, factionalist and disintegrative tendencies can only be prevented “when essentials can be constantly reaffirmed, uniting political adversaries”,²⁴ and when parties share a “common language”.²⁵ Neumann therefore seems to endorse a conception of parties intended as bilingual agents, mastering both a common institutional and constitutional language and particular idioms expressing partial conceptions of the good. However, he highlights how totalitarian parties display an essential disagreement on the fundamentals and ultimate ends of the polity in which they act. Even when they act within a democratic party system, they “make use of its ‘instruments’ without abiding by its principles”.²⁶ Rather than embracing the ideas of regulated rivalry and loyal opposition, they fight the existing political and institutional framework and aim to replace it with a new order; they behave like factions in a religious war.²⁷ The totalitarian party, according to Neumann, conceives the state as the mere executor of the party’s will,²⁸ using it as an instrument for the monistic implementation of its partial ends. By subordinating the state to the party, and therefore the whole to the part, totalitarian parties become mere appendices of the state²⁹ and contravene the normative criteria of party politics that, in the first chapter, I drew from party bilingualism.

Interesting elements also emerge from Hannah Arendt’s³⁰ analysis of totalitarianism. As well as distinguishing parties from movements, Arendt also illustrates the emergence of the “party above parties”³¹ which, behind its apparent concern for the public good, only aimed “to promote one particular interest until it had devoured all others, and to make one particular group the master of the state machine”.³² Arendt agrees that parties never ought to identify with the whole in which they operate or

²⁴ Ibid., p.119.

²⁵ Ibid., p.119.

²⁶ Ibid., p.121.

²⁷ Ibid., p.122.

²⁸ Ibid., p.128.

²⁹ Ibid., pp.128-129.

³⁰ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

³¹ Ibid., p.256.

³² Ibid., p.256.

even ignore or attempt to destroy other parties.³³ This claim is in line with the normative criteria of party politics that I defended in the first chapter. By not complying with those criteria, parties would resemble those factional movements which, according to Arendt, aim for the destruction of the state.³⁴ For example Nazi and Soviet parties, she argues, relegated the state to a subsidiary role, subordinated to the party,³⁵ and therefore, I would argue, infringed the normative criteria of party politics.

All the authors mentioned so far seem therefore to agree on an ideal conception of political parties, intended as bilingual intermediaries between state and civil society, promoting particular interests within a common shared framework. This characterization of parties corresponds with the one that I illustrated and endorsed in the first chapter and the normative criteria that I drew from it are clearly incompatible with the nature and goals of totalitarian parties. These display both factionalist and unitarist tendencies in their approach towards the existing institutional framework. On the one hand, they do not aim to promote the interests and values of the whole polity but only the partial instances of a fragment of society. On the other hand, they aim to impose this partial set of values upon the entire polity, without respecting the procedures and limits of democratic politics.

Totalitarian parties “confront both the political pluralism that is the universal circumstance of parties and the actuality of parties. Their party is a means to erase or repress the rest”.³⁶ They aim to re-establish a whole without parts, a polity without parties. On the basis of their philosophical holism, totalitarian parties aim “to erase pluralism, above all partisan political pluralism”.³⁷ As they infringe the normative criteria of party politics, totalitarian parties, which are expressions of ethical and political monism, ought to be banned from the public political realm of liberal democratic polities. Nevertheless, totalitarian parties no longer represent a real threat

³³ Ibid., p.253, n.83.

³⁴ Ibid., p.257, p.259.

³⁵ Ibid., p.259.

³⁶ Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.35.

³⁷ Ibid., p.43.

in contemporary liberal democratic regimes.³⁸ The kind of political extremism embodied by the old totalitarian ideologies of the 1920s and 1930s has nowadays faded.³⁹ As I will show in the fourth chapter, this makes it almost paradoxical that most European liberal democracies still choose a “militant” approach when dealing, for example, with extremist or allegedly antidemocratic parties. However, in that chapter I will also explain how new forms of ethical and political monism are often promoted, within contemporary liberal democracies, by extreme right parties. Such parties aim to replace liberal democracy with populist and strongly majoritarian versions of democracy, in which individual rights would no longer be safeguarded by the checks and balances and the constitutional norms present in liberal democratic regimes. When examining those parties, I will illustrate how the normative reasons that justify their banning should be weighed against the arguments for including them into liberal democratic polities.

Totalitarianism, Ethical Monism and Utopianism

Totalitarianism, I explained earlier, is a kind of political regime grounded in a monistic conception of the good and aiming for the total control of society.⁴⁰ However, I also explained how totalitarianism represents the ideal (and therefore unattainable) expression of political monism. The ultimate goal of totalitarianism is “the subjugation of both state and society under a utopian, unpolitical claim to rule”.⁴¹ The utopian character of totalitarianism, and the fact that its ideal goal can never be realized, is rooted in its appeal to an ethical monism which does not recognize the plural nature of the good. Certainly, as I showed in the previous section, many attempts have been made, especially in the recent past, to implement the utopian ideal of totalitarianism, with tragic results for the polities in which such experiments have been conducted. However, a normative analysis must examine totalitarianism in ideal terms, in order to unveil its ideal inconsistency with value pluralism and, consequently, with the pluralism of party politics and its normative

³⁸ Giovanni Capoccia, “Defence of Democracy in Inter-War Europe: A past Still Present?”, in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p.85.

³⁹ Ibid., p.104.

⁴⁰ Andreski, “Is Totalitarianism a Meaningful Concept?”, p.719.

⁴¹ Buchheim, *Totalitarian Rule: Its Nature and Characteristics*, p.99.

criteria. A critique of the ethical (monistic) foundations of totalitarianism will therefore be the theme of the second part of this chapter.

The connection between totalitarianism and ethical monism is one of the central aspects of Isaiah Berlin's⁴² theory of value pluralism. According to Berlin, the crucial feature of totalitarian regimes is their attempt to reconcile value differences by tracing them back to a single ethical source to which all values can be subordinated. In this kind of ethical framework, achieving the final goal of a perfect society justifies "the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals - justice or progress or the happiness of future generations, or the sacred mission or emancipation of a nation or race or class, or even liberty itself".⁴³ Ethical monism, therefore, leads to the utopian project of "a final harmony in which all riddles are solved, all contradictions reconciled"⁴⁴ and aims to justify the authority of that individual, or group of people, who knows what the single unifying value is.

Given the lack of such a unifying ethical principle, Berlin argues, we must rely on our everyday experience and admit that "we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others".⁴⁵ The necessity of having to choose among this multitude of incompatible ends is what, according to Berlin, leads men to cherish freedom of choice as "an end in itself".⁴⁶ Berlin emphasizes that the attempt to impose a monistic and utopian conception of the good upon a society is bound "to encounter some unforeseen and unforeseeable human development, which it will not fit".⁴⁷ This will result in the use of oppressive means in order for that single view to be implemented, and in "the vivisection of actual human societies into some fixed pattern dictated by our fallible understanding of a largely imaginary past or a wholly imaginary future".⁴⁸ Totalitarianism, with its apparatus of physical, psychological

⁴² Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty".

⁴³ Ibid., p.212.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.213. See also Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.155.

⁴⁵ Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", 213-214.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.214.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.216.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.216.

and scientific tools, is the result of this monistic conception of the good, and of the utopian attempt to impose a single truth upon an irremediably plural society.

It must be highlighted that, according to Berlin, totalitarianism is rooted not only in ethical monism but also in the idea of “positive liberty”. Contrary to “negative liberty”, which Berlin defines as “liberty from” or “non-interference”, in other words “the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others”,⁴⁹ positive liberty denotes the idea of self-mastery and self-realization, the individual’s will to depend on herself, to be guided by her own reasons, rather than by external causes or agents.⁵⁰ The idea of positive freedom, Berlin argues, may easily lead to the distinction between an empirical, heteronomous self, driven by passions and instinct, and a real, autonomous self, associated with reason and with a higher nature.⁵¹ The main risk, according to Berlin, arises when the true self is identified with a collective self, with “a social ‘whole’ of which the individual is an element or aspect: a tribe, a race, a Church, a State, the great society of the living and the dead and the yet unborn”.⁵² This eventually leads to the idea “that it is possible, and at times justifiable, to coerce men in the name of some goal (let us say, justice or public health) which they would, if they were more enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not, because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt”.⁵³

Yet the main problem, in Berlin’s view, is not raised by positive liberty as such but rather by its connection with value monism. As George Crowder also highlights, “[t]he authoritarian view becomes more compelling on the assumption that moral considerations form a monist unity, such that a single end or principle resolves value conflicts in every case regardless of the circumstances”.⁵⁴ According to Berlin, instead, fundamental moral and political values are intrinsically plural and incommensurable. Consequently, “the possibility of conflict - and of tragedy - can never wholly be eliminated from human life, either personal or social. The necessity

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.169.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.178. For a critique of this distinction, see Gerald C. MacCallum, “Negative and Positive Freedom”, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol.76, No.3 (July) (1967), pp.312-334.

⁵¹ Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, p.179

⁵² Ibid., 179.

⁵³ Ibid., p.179.

⁵⁴ Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, p.88.

of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition”.⁵⁵

Contrary to Berlin, Crowder emphasizes that the connection between monism and totalitarianism is not logical or necessary. Certain monistic views (e.g. utilitarianism), he argues, do not lead to the establishment of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless, according to Crowder, due to its emphasis on a utopian total convergence of values which blinds us from alternative views, value monism is more likely (i.e. than value pluralism) to lead to totalitarian outcomes.⁵⁶ From the idea that goods are plural and incommensurable, instead, “it follows that each has, in a rough sense, an equal claim on our attention”.⁵⁷ Ranking of plural values, according to Crowder, is only possible in particular circumstances and contexts, rather than on the basis of an “abstract or utopian super-value or formula”.⁵⁸

Political Parties and Value Pluralism

In order to clarify the relation between party politics and value pluralism, it is important to distinguish the latter from the reasonable disagreement that we encountered in Rawls’s *Political Liberalism*. As I explained in the previous chapter, Rawls’s account aims to justify a liberal political arrangement to those individuals and groups who do not sustain a comprehensive liberal doctrine. The price paid by Rawls for that purpose is to limit the legitimacy of his theory only to those societies whose public culture already implicitly displays the principles and values entailed by political liberalism. However, once the hidden comprehensive grounds of Rawls’s political doctrine have been disclosed (as I hope they were in the second chapter) his theory seems to reveal a further loss. Given its comprehensive controversial (liberal) foundations, political liberalism might in fact not be endorsed by all citizens, not

⁵⁵ Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, p.214. For other contemporary accounts of value pluralism, see Ruth Chang, *Incommensurability, Incomparability and Practical Reason* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); John Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Steven Lukes, *Moral Conflict and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Thomas Nagel, “The Fragmentation of Value”, in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Canto, 1991), pp.128-141; Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁵⁶ Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, p.97.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.96.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.96. See also Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.101.

even within those specific societies to which it is meant to apply (i.e. Western liberal democratic ones). Therefore, as well as lacking universal scope, it also loses the legitimacy that it could have derived from a genuine political turn. Unlike Rawls's reasonable pluralism, value pluralism, as endorsed by Crowder and Berlin, is instead a universalistic outlook. However, it also implies that "human values are universal only at a high level of generality, and are interpreted and applied in different ways in different contexts, both historical and cultural".⁵⁹ This clarification, together with Crowder's aforementioned idea that ranking values is possible in specific circumstances and contexts, reveals a kind of particularism which is much more suitable for understanding the pluralistic agency of political parties.

In the first chapter I explained how parties ought to remain "parts" and, therefore, they ought to acknowledge and respect party pluralism, i.e. the presence of other parties, beside them, within the polity in which they operate. Totalitarian parties, we have seen, contravene this normative criterion; they no longer provide the intermediate channel between civil society and state, particularistic idioms and a common institutional and political language. Parties ought to acknowledge party pluralism in order to remain bilingual. In ideal terms, party bilingualism could not even be conceived without party pluralism. In the same way that totalitarianism represents the ideal political expression of ethical monism, party politics represents the ideal political expression of value pluralism. Political parties ought to behave like parts-of-a-whole and therefore respect party pluralism. Parties which convey monistic ethical views and aim to forcefully impose "the single truth" upon other parties and their voters are therefore infringing one of the crucial normative criteria of party politics. However, as I will explain later in the chapter, parties' respect for party pluralism does not require the endorsement of value pluralism as such. Political parties, that is, can preserve their monistic conceptions of the good while adhering to party pluralism.

The normative criterion which requires parties to respect pluralism is, given its ideal nature, universal. Whenever and wherever they are formed, parties always ought to

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.45.

comply with it as “political pluralism...is...the universal circumstance of parties”.⁶⁰ This is in line with Crowder and Berlin’s universalistic conception of value pluralism. However, I explained, Crowder also argues that ranking of values is possible in specific circumstances and contexts, although not on the basis of abstract and general ethical standards. Ranking of values, for example, provides the rationale for establishing a constitutional order within a polity. In deciding for certain constitutional principles we give them priority over less fundamental values so that, whenever a conflict arises, the former must be given precedence. This conclusion presupposes the belief, which I will extensively defend in the fifth and sixth chapters, that there is no qualitative difference between moral and ethical values, i.e. between the right and the good. In principle, this framework also applies to Rawls’s political liberalism. Yet in Rawls’s theory, as I explained in the previous chapter, the ranking of values implies in fact the unwarranted subordination of every comprehensive view to the political liberal conception of justice. As William Galston explains, “while Rawls does not reduce what we rightly care about to a single measure of value, he gives some values (those in the first principle of justice) lexical priority over others”.⁶¹ I explained in the second chapter what consequences this implies for political parties, especially for religious ones.

On the contrary, a universal value pluralism accompanied by a particularistic interpretation of its context-related implementations, as in Crowder’s theory, permits a ranking of values which may vary from one set of circumstances to another. This implies that the constitutional framework present in a certain polity may legitimately differ from the one that we encounter in a different country without this undermining value pluralism and its political expression, i.e. party pluralism. Yet this difference cannot be unlimited. Indeed Crowder does mention a minimum set of moral standards including “respect for universal values, recognition of incommensurability, promotion of diversity, and acknowledgement of reasonable disagreement”.⁶² These criteria indicate the idea of “a domain of basic moral decency”,⁶³ i.e. a set of minimal moral standards which any lexical ordering and constitutional arrangement must

⁶⁰ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.35.

⁶¹ William Galston, *Liberal Pluralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.31.

⁶² Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, p.177.

⁶³ Galston, *Liberal Pluralism*, p.30.

respect.⁶⁴ Within the limits posed by these criteria, the common constitutional language parties ought to respect, in order to display loyal opposition and preserve their bilingualism, is likely to vary, depending on the values and principles which are prioritized in different contexts. In liberal democratic polities, as I explained in the first chapter, this means that parties ought to respect liberal democratic values. I will address in the next chapter the problem of dealing with those parties which contravene the normative criteria of party politics and, within liberal democracies, fail to comply with the constitutional and institutional frameworks and their underlying values.

Value Pluralism and Reasonable Disagreement

Value pluralism is more suitable than reasonable disagreement for making sense of party politics. It is more in line with the universal ideal normative criterion that parties always ought to respect pluralism, while providing the rationale for the presence of diverging ranking of values, and therefore constitutional arrangements, in different polities. Yet value pluralism seems to be a much more controversial moral position than the reasonable disagreement in which Rawls, we have seen, grounds his political liberalism. Reasonable disagreement, we saw in the second chapter, results from the so-called “burdens of judgement”, i.e. “the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgement in the ordinary course of political life”.⁶⁵ It therefore represents a form of epistemic abstinence about the good. Indeed, in order to preserve the neutral character of political liberalism, Rawls abstains from considering any perfectionist doctrine objectively “true”. Value pluralism is, for him, nothing but one of the many reasonable comprehensive conceptions of the good (e.g. as well as Kant’s moral theory, religious views with account of free faith etc.) from within which political liberalism can be endorsed.

⁶⁴ See Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict*, p.155. See also Michael Kenny, “Isaiah Berlin’s Contribution to Modern Political Theory”, *Political Studies*, Vol.48 (2000), p.1033; John Gray, “Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol.6, No.1 (1998), pp.32-33.

⁶⁵ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a), p.56.

This has two important implications in Rawls's analysis. First, value pluralism is clearly distinct from reasonable disagreement and is subject to the constraints of public reason, which pose limits to the use of perfectionist arguments in the public political realm. Second, and most importantly, value pluralism is one of the many comprehensive conceptions of the good on which we can reasonably disagree. This means that, in Rawls's political liberalism, there might be space, for example, for those individuals or groups who endorse value monism and reject value pluralism. As it does not pronounce any judgement on the truth of either monism or pluralism, political liberalism seems to have room for monistic conceptions of the good (e.g. utilitarianism, comprehensive liberalism, Catholicism etc.) which endorse the idea of a hierarchy of values and reject value pluralism. Both monistic and pluralistic views, as long as they are reasonable, can participate in the overlapping consensus. This seems to render political liberalism much more accommodating, than substantive value pluralism, of ethical and religious pluralism. By considering value pluralism not as its ethical basis but as only one among several comprehensive conceptions of the good, it might leave more room, for example, for religious citizens who endorse reasonable monistic conceptions of the good (e.g. Catholicism with an account of free faith). As long as these citizens can agree on a political conception of justice, it does not matter whether they embrace monistic or pluralistic comprehensive views.

I already explained in the second chapter the reasons why political liberalism is actually not very inclusive towards perfectionist claims (including religious ones) and, consequently, towards those political parties which convey them. Due to Rawls's expansive conceptions of public reason and reasonableness, I argued, the number of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines which may be unrelated to political liberalism is potentially very broad. This may imply their exclusion from the overlapping consensus devised by Rawls. By being excluded from the public political realm (or, at least, from those areas which involve constitutional matters, directly or indirectly) and from the sphere subject to the normative constraints of party politics, I explained, these views risk being relegated to the margins of political life and becoming therefore a greater threat for liberal democratic polities.

Now, however, I need to address the important question concerning the potential limits of value pluralism in guaranteeing ethical and religious pluralism (and, implicitly, religious party pluralism). The problem seems to be that, if we endorse comprehensive value pluralism and base the political framework of a polity on it, we risk excluding those individuals or groups or parties which endorse monistic conceptions of the good. Their comprehensive monistic views, that is, would be incompatible with comprehensive value pluralism. This would also have serious implications for political parties and party pluralism. Parties conveying monistic religious views, that is, would be excluded from a framework grounded in substantive value pluralism.⁶⁶ Paradoxically, therefore, a conception of value pluralism, more substantive than the idea of reasonable disagreement, might lead to a more radical exclusion of religious views and parties than Rawls's political liberalism. How can we overcome this almost paradoxical implication of value pluralism?

First, I would like to show that value pluralism is not in fact more controversial than reasonable disagreement, and therefore not more problematic for parties which endorse monistic (religious and non-religious) conceptions of the good. It is true that, as Crowder highlights, value pluralism involves the conviction that there are certain *objective* universal values endorsed across cultures but instantiated in different ways depending on the circumstances. Value pluralism, that is, is not a mere form of subjectivism or relativism but the idea that values are plural in an objective sense. However, contrary to what Rawls argues, Crowder claims that value pluralism is not a (controversial) comprehensive conception of the good life⁶⁷ but rather "a meta-ethical theory of the good which implies a politics of accommodation".⁶⁸ Value pluralism, that is, does not tell us which things are good and which not, but only that there is a plurality of values and conceptions of the good and that we cannot reconcile them under a superior value or set of values. Yet this still leaves open the

⁶⁶ The attribute "monistic", in this context, should not be confused with "monotheistic". Religious views, that is, can in principle be both "polytheistic" and "monistic", i.e. they can consider the commands of a pantheon of several deities the single ethical source to which all ethical values ought to be subordinated.

⁶⁷ Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, p.177.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.178.

problem of reconciling value pluralism with those monistic conceptions of the good which do not actually agree with the meta-ethical claims of value pluralism. Even if we assume that value pluralism does not entail any absolute ranking of values in itself, it might still be the case that monistic conceptions of the good simply reject the idea that values are plural. In the end value monism, like value pluralism, is ultimately a meta-ethical conception. By simply shifting from an ethical to a meta-ethical level of analysis, therefore, we do not overcome the irreconcilability of value monism and pluralism. The problem reappears in meta-ethical terms.

Nevertheless, we might still be able to prove that value pluralism is not less inclusive than Rawls's idea of reasonable disagreement, by showing that the latter depends on the former. Indeed, according to Crowder, the burdens of judgement, which Rawls defines as "the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgement in the ordinary course of political life",⁶⁹ presuppose a comprehensive conception of value pluralism, entailing the idea of a substantive plurality of goods incommensurable with each other.⁷⁰ More specifically, Crowder refers to two of the burdens of judgement mentioned by Rawls, namely e) and f). The former establishes that "[o]ften there are different kinds of normative considerations of different force on both sides of an issue and it is difficult to make an overall assessment".⁷¹ Here, Rawls envisages a link between his argument and Thomas Nagel's idea of the "fragmentation of value", i.e. the idea that "values are incomparable: they are each specified by one of the several irreducibly different perspectives within which values arise...Put another way, these values have different bases and this fact is reflected in their different formal features".⁷² As Crowder notes, Rawls does acknowledge that the kind of view proposed by Nagel is a comprehensive conception of the good, and that political liberalism should avoid relying on such controversial claims. However, "since he [i.e. Rawls] suggests no alternative account of e)", Crowder argues, "one must suppose that this is the best he has to offer".⁷³ Furthermore, Crowder highlights how ethical monism would

⁶⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.56.

⁷⁰ See Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, pp.165-171.

⁷¹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.57n.

⁷³ Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, p.168.

certainly be incompatible with e) and therefore the latter must imply pluralism.

The other burden of judgement examined by Crowder, i.e. f), states that in setting up “any system of social institutions...[we are] forced to select among cherished values...[and] we face great difficulties in setting priorities and making adjustments. Many hard decisions may seem to have no clear answer”.⁷⁴ Indeed Rawls explicitly refers to Berlin’s theory of value pluralism. He highlights that “[a]s Berlin has long maintained...there is no social world without loss: that is, no social world that does not exclude some ways of life that realize in special ways certain fundamental values”.⁷⁵ Rawls even states that the impossibility of having a social world without loss “is rooted in the nature of values and the world, and much human tragedy reflects that”.⁷⁶ These are Rawls’s own words and, as Crowder rightly emphasizes, they testify how Rawls’s conception of reasonable disagreement is clearly rooted in value pluralism, intended as a theory of the objective nature of the good, not in the idea of a mere epistemic abstinence about the good.

This makes it even more difficult to accept Rawls’s proposed solution. His implicit endorsement of substantive value pluralism, that is, may not easily coexist with his idea that reasonable comprehensive views can overlap on the basis of a shared political conception of justice. In the case of mere reasonable disagreement, reasonableness might be the glue holding diverse (but not in principle irreconcilable) conceptions of the good together. In the case of value pluralism, however, given the idea of irreconcilability between diverse conceptions of the good, it becomes more difficult to understand how an overlapping consensus might be achieved.

However, as I explained in the second chapter, Rawls’s conception of reasonableness is unwarrantedly biased. Instead of adopting a neutral epistemological notion of “reasonableness”, Rawls loads this concept with a political liberal connotation, thus rendering his political liberalism circular insofar as it excludes unreasonable views from public debate just because they are not politically liberal. Perhaps Rawls does

⁷⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.57.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.197.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.197n.

need such a strong conception of reasonableness as a counterweight to the value pluralism on which his idea of reasonable disagreement implicitly relies. Unveiling the substantive grounds of Rawls's conception of reasonable disagreement might help us to break this vicious circle between his ideas of reasonableness and political liberalism. However, this might also make it more difficult to find a point of convergence for substantially plural conceptions of the good.

This analysis has therefore both positive and negative implications for the problem I am addressing here. On the one hand, it reduces the gap between reasonable disagreement and value pluralism, showing how the former is ultimately grounded in the latter. It is therefore not legitimate to consider value pluralism more controversial and more problematic than reasonable disagreement, and therefore more unlikely to be accepted by those individuals or groups which endorse monistic (religious or non-religious) conceptions of the good. On the other hand, and consequently, this makes it even more necessary to explain how a political framework grounded in the idea of substantive value pluralism can be inclusive towards monistic conceptions of the good and monistic parties, including religious ones. Although value pluralism renders explicit the metaphysical assumptions of Rawls's theory, it also leaves us with the difficult task of reconciling value pluralism itself with the presence of monistic conceptions of the good and of the parties which convey them.

It is here, I believe, that my ideal conception of political parties, including religious ones, and the normative criteria that stem from it, may play an important role. Parties, I explained in the first chapter, ought to acknowledge and respect party pluralism. In order to preserve their unique bilingual nature, that is, parties ought to accept that they are parts among other parts, and that each of these parts conveys a specific (or a set of) comprehensive conception(s) of the good. By foregoing their specific idiom, I argued, parties would inevitably forego also their bilingualism and would no longer be able to distinguish themselves from other parties. I also explained that the party pluralism parties ought to acknowledge is, in ideal terms, of a permanent kind. Any idea that this pluralism was temporary, and that party pluralism and party conflict could be eliminated, would undermine the scope for

party politics and party bilingualism.

In this sense, we should be careful in endorsing, for example, Nancy Rosenblum's statement that "[w]ith political organizations and especially partisanship, the 'fact of pluralism' is made concrete for democratic purposes".⁷⁷ This statement suggests that parties institutionalize the mere "fact" of pluralism, i.e. that they bring a contingent plurality of ethical, religious etc. perspectives into the public political realm and translate them into policy proposals which are debated during electoral campaigns and within parliaments, submitted to voting and then, sometimes, implemented. Yet the mere "fact of pluralism" seems to imply the idea of a temporary situation due to contingent circumstances but not preventing, in principle, the possibility of a single overarching good reconciling the plurality of values. This is not consistent, ideally speaking, with the kind of pluralism parties ought to comply with.

Indeed it is Rosenblum herself who highlights very clearly the contrast between the ineliminable pluralism of party politics and those conceptions analogous to Rawls's idea of reasonable disagreement. She emphasizes how the idea of regulated rivalry, that parties ought to respect, "makes no appearance in democratic theory today (where often enough conflict is tamed, renamed 'disagreement', and ideally transformed into consensus, and where in any case parties are ignored)".⁷⁸ The reference to Rawls's ideas of reasonable disagreement and overlapping consensus, although not explicitly made by Rosenblum, seems clear in this instance. Given that regulated rivalry and party politics presuppose the idea of an ineliminable pluralism, then, how can we reconcile value pluralism, party pluralism and religious pluralism? In other words, how can we ground a political framework in the idea of substantive value pluralism without rendering it inhospitable to monistic religious conceptions of the good?

⁷⁷ Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.24.

⁷⁸ Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Glorious Traditions of Anti-Partyism and Moments of Appreciations", Lecture 1, "On the Side of the Angels", The Storr Lectures at Yale Law School, Spring (2006) [online]. Available at: http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~nrosenbl/Storrs_Lecture1.pdf [accessed 4 June 2008], p.26.

First of all, I am not arguing that value pluralism should shape the political framework in which parties have to operate. This framework ought to presuppose value pluralism, i.e. it ought to be devised so as to be open to a plurality of conceptions of the good, in a more inclusive way than Rawls's political liberalism. In itself, however, it ought to be thin and inclusive, without persistently reflecting one or many comprehensive conceptions of the good. I will explain, in the fifth and sixth chapters, how a liberal democratic framework embodying these features can be provided by a model of democratic deliberation grounded in pragmatism. This framework would not in principle exclude parties conveying monistic conceptions of the good, religious or non-religious. As it would only establish the basic liberal democratic principles regulating deliberation among citizens and parties, it would not be intrinsically hostile to monistic parties.

Indeed the institutionalization of value pluralism would not be represented, in ideal terms, by the constitutional and institutional framework of this ideal liberal democratic polity but by the political parties operating within it. Furthermore, value pluralism would acquire a novel qualitative shape when conveyed by political parties. As I explained in the first chapter, the translation of societal values and cleavages into political ones is the unique contribution that parties can provide thanks to their bilingual nature. Parties do not simply mirror pre-existing societal interests and demands. Instead, they are "opportunistic responses to political possibilities".⁷⁹ Social cleavages have to be actively politicized by political parties in order to become politically relevant. Parties, therefore, possess a creative agency which helps to transform pre-political values. In ideal terms, the plural values which are politicized by political parties become subject to the normative criteria of party politics, i.e. loyal opposition, respect of party pluralism and use of legal means to obtain power. Yet in no way do these criteria require parties to forego their comprehensive conceptions of the good, whether these are monistic or not. Parties, including those carrying monistic views, are only required to acknowledge and respect organized political pluralism, not value pluralism.

⁷⁹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.103.

This distinction is crucial for my analysis. By lifting value pluralism on to the political level, political parties allow citizens who endorse monistic ethical conceptions of the good to maintain them while abiding by the normative constraints of party politics. These constraints only apply to the political, not the ethical realm. Therefore, although party politics is expression of value pluralism, the normative constraints which, ideally speaking, regulate it, only concern the political sphere. As Rosenblum highlights, parties need not renounce a metaphysical understanding of truth and values but only acknowledge “that they are parts and will always be seen as partial...All that is necessary is acknowledging that organized political disagreement is ineliminable and party conflict its form”.⁸⁰ Parties, that is, need not endorse ethical value pluralism.

In the seventh chapter I will also show how political parties, ideally intended, are the institutional embodiments of the idea that the metaphysical (e.g. religious) understanding of truth need not entail epistemological authoritarianism. Indeed, in ideal terms, “partisans do not look to liquidate, erase or permanently disorganize the opposition...[P]artisans do not see minority status as irreversible...Partisans in the majority, too, recognize that their standing is partial and temporary...[P]artisanship entails commitment to the provisional nature of political authority”.⁸¹ These features, I will argue, correspond to the central aspects of a pragmatist model of epistemology and deliberation. What this tells us, in relation to my present analysis, is that parties’ respect for political pluralism is closely linked to the idea that they ought to accept the provisional nature of political authority. Within the limits of the political framework in which it operates (e.g. a liberal democratic one), a political party has the chance to obtain control of government via legal means (e.g. elections) and, once in power, to implement its specific policy agenda. However, respect for political pluralism requires this party (and any other party) to accept that its governing status is provisional and subject to the legal rules which, in the polity in which it operates, regulate the procedure for re-election.

This normative criterion of party politics is consistent with the idea that parties can

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.142-143.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.363.

preserve their metaphysical (monistic or pluralistic) conceptions of the good. Party pluralism is an expression of value pluralism and individual parties might convey either pluralistic or monistic views (both religious and non-religious). The latter, however, only ought to acknowledge and respect political pluralism, i.e. the ineliminable plurality of political parties, not the idea that values are intrinsically plural. This might still be a tough requirement for certain parties but it is only a political, not an ethical requirement. Indeed, as I briefly showed in the first chapter, there are examples of religious groups which, by entering party politics, have managed to combine the upholding of their monistic religious faiths with the acceptance of political pluralism. For instance, confessional parties which operated in Western Europe between the end of the 19th century and World War II (WWII), and which endorsed monistic religious views, “eventually relaxed their antipluralist, antipolitical ambitions, and...were integrated into the political systems they loathed and had intended to subvert”.⁸² The members of these parties did not abandon their monistic religious (e.g. Catholic, Protestant) faiths. Yet they gradually reconciled them with respect for political pluralism. Certainly whether this kind of process might actually succeed is a mere empirical matter. What matters for my present analysis is that, in ideal normative terms, the endorsement of monistic conceptions of the good and the acceptance of party pluralism are compatible as the latter does not require endorsement of value pluralism.

Party politics, intended in this sense, can therefore provide an inclusive arena for both pluralistic and monistic conceptions of the good which have been politicized via political parties. The irremediable pluralism of party politics ought to be acknowledged and respected by all parties, in order for them to preserve their bilingualism. Yet parties ought not to acknowledge value pluralism as such but only its political expression. There are no reasons for thinking that this conception of party politics might be in principle difficult to accept for those parties that channel monistic conceptions of the good. It only establishes that, if they do decide to embark in party politics, individuals and groups ought to abide by the normative criteria of party politics, which include respect for party pluralism. Parties which promote

⁸² Ibid., p.42. See also Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

monistic conceptions of the good (e.g. religious, utilitarian, Marxist etc.) ought to be banned only if they aim to destroy party pluralism, e.g. by establishing a one-party (e.g. totalitarian) or even a “party-less” regime. I will examine some examples of these kinds of parties in the fourth chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a normative defence of value pluralism against monistic totalitarianism, and shown its relationship with party pluralism. I have especially focused on the distinction between value pluralism and Rawls’s idea of reasonable disagreement, and shown that the latter ultimately relies on the former. I have also argued that, although party pluralism is grounded in value pluralism, it allows the presence of political parties which convey monistic conceptions of the good. As long as these parties acknowledge and respect party pluralism and the provisional character of political authority, they may preserve their monistic comprehensive views and need not embrace value pluralism. Having rejected both monistic perfectionism and pluralistic neutrality as normative frameworks for making sense of party politics, and having endorsed instead pluralistic perfectionism, in the fourth chapter I will deal with the problem of establishing the legitimate limits of party politics within liberal democratic polities. I will therefore examine various normative arguments for banning political parties which may represent a threat for liberal democracies and weigh them against alternative arguments for including such parties in democratic politics. This analysis will then allow me to introduce the theme of the fifth and sixth chapters, where I will conduct an analysis of the relationship between parties and democratic deliberation and defend a pragmatist conception of deliberative democracy, arguing that this is the most suitable theoretical framework for making sense of the perfectionist and pluralistic agency of political parties.

Part II

Political Parties and Democratic Deliberation

Chapter 4 – Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Party Politics

In the first chapter, I provided an ideal conception of political party involving the principles of “loyal opposition”, “regulated rivalry” and respect for pluralism. These, I explained, are the normative criteria of party politics and are grounded in the unique bilingual nature of political parties. I also explained that only the presence of an institutional and constitutional consensus, preceding partisan divisions, allows parties to abide by these criteria and therefore be “a subdivision compatible with unity rather than a division that disrupts it”.¹ I also provided an extensive analysis of the history and prehistory of the term “party”, in order to illustrate how my normative ideal of party politics is neither unusual nor entirely new, but reflects instead a certain way political parties have come to be intended since they first appeared on the political landscape of Western polities.

In the present chapter, I am going to focus on the normative problem concerning the acceptable limits and restrictions which ought to be imposed upon political parties within liberal democratic polities. In the first part of the chapter, I will critically assess the accounts of Nancy Rosenblum² and Samuel Issacharoff,³ who are possibly the only scholars who have addressed this research area from a theoretical point of view. I will therefore analyse the limits and constraints of party politics by focusing on the criteria on the basis of which a liberal democratic state may legitimately ban political parties. I will argue that the normative criteria for condemning a party’s disloyalty to the democratic game and excluding it from party politics should be grounded in the ideal of political party that I presented in the first chapter. There is no need, that is, to justify them by appealing to values or principles outside party politics, e.g. the intrinsic valuableness of liberal democracy or pluralism. Such justifications would indeed make it necessary to provide normative arguments to sustain the view that liberal democracy and pluralism are in fact valuable, thus potentially leading to an endless regressive process of justification. Furthermore, this

¹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.16.

² Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 412-455.

³ Samuel Issacharoff, “Fragile Democracies”, *Harvard Law Review*, Vol.120, No.6 (2007), pp.1406-1467.

approach would implicitly disregard the normative relevance of party politics which I am illustrating in this work.

In the second part of the chapter I will show that, although the normative criteria of party politics may in principle justify the banning of certain parties within liberal democratic polities, there may sometimes be stronger normative reasons for justifying the inclusion of antidemocratic or semi-loyal parties into the democratic political game. On the one hand, the presence of such parties may often signal certain flaws in the democratic legitimacy of the regime in which they operate. Therefore they function as warning agents which may help in fostering a debate on the constitutional and institutional consensus of the polity. On the other hand, party politics might contribute in triggering a process of democratic acculturation in those groups (even extremist or antidemocratic ones) which decide to create political parties to pursue their goals. By complying with the normative criteria of party politics, parties can channel and moderate particularistic claims, including extremist ones, in a way which favours democracy. Furthermore, excluding extremist or even antidemocratic groups from the democratic game would relegate them to the margins of political life, where they would most likely radicalize their claims and therefore become an even greater threat for democracy.

Justifying the Banning of Political Parties: Nancy L. Rosenblum

In the first chapter, I highlighted how political parties ought to aim to obtain power and be willing to be voted out of office only through legal means (e.g. in liberal democracies, through elections rather than by means of terrorist attacks). In a similar way, Rosenblum starts from the stipulation that parties “are presumptively committed to a ‘free and fair’ electoral process - to obtaining a share of offices by legal means, by persuasion in public competition...[and that therefore]...outlawing parties is not easily justified”.⁴ Yet I believe that this conclusion is internally inconsistent. If we interpret Rosenblum’s statement as concerning ideal parties, then the commitment to the democratic electoral process that real parties ought to display

⁴ Nancy Rosenblum, “Partisan Faith”, prepared for “Multiculturalism and the Antidiscrimination Principle”, Tel Aviv (Dec 2005) [online]. Available on-line at: <http://www.rg-law.ac.il/conference05/articles/nancy.pdf> [accessed 4 June 2008], p.14.

makes it easier, rather than more difficult, to provide legitimate reasons for banning those parties which do not comply with it.

According to Rosenblum, parties are consistent with democracy if they are committed to trial by elections, if they do not aim to eliminate the opposition when they are in power and if, upon electoral defeat, they renounce their office without dispute.⁵ On these grounds, among the reasons for banning parties Rosenblum mentions, first, “[t]hreats of violent political opposition and revolutionary overthrow”.⁶ These conducts contrast with an essential feature of party politics, namely the “assurance that in situations of deep political division, conflict is restricted to the regulated rivalry of obtaining political office and influencing laws and policy by peaceful, electoral means”.⁷ Furthermore, Rosenblum emphasizes that “nonviolence is built into the definition [of political parties]”,⁸ thus rendering the idea itself of “violent party” self-contradictory.

There are two problems in Rosenblum’s argument here. First, the criteria that, according to her, may help us to establish the compatibility between parties and democracy, are in fact the same normative criteria that I included in my ideal conception of parties that I presented in the first chapter. Therefore, rather than on the basis of their consistency with democracy, parties should be assessed in relation to the normative criteria of party politics. Second, Rosenblum’s assertion that political parties cannot in principle be violent is unwarranted. Certainly, as I explained in the first chapter, even a minimalistic definition of political party includes the idea that parties seek power through legal means (e.g. through elections). However, there have been and there are in fact parties which, while participating in elections, also use violent means in order to obtain power (e.g. by creating a terrorist arm) or others which, having obtained power through legal and nonviolent means, use violence to restrict the freedoms and rights of certain groups within society. If we include the idea of nonviolence in the general definition of “political party”, all those parties which use violence could not even be called parties

⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.414.

⁶ Ibid., p. 423.

⁷ Ibid., p.423.

⁸ Rosenblum, “Partisan Faith”, p.18.

in the first instance. Instead, nonviolence should be traced back to the normative criteria of party politics that stem from the ideal conception of political parties that I presented in the first chapter.

The second reason provided by Rosenblum for justifying the banning of parties, “inciting hate”, has analogous implications. Rosenblum endorses the idea that hate speech undermines democratic culture and wears down the tolerance and broad-mindedness required in a multicultural society which is devoted to the idea of equality.⁹ This argument, presented in this way, seems to be grounded in the idea that tolerance, open-mindedness, equality etc. are valuable things in themselves and that this justifies banning those parties which deny or jeopardize them. However widespread this view might be, it requires explaining on what grounds these things can be considered good or even just desirable, thus leading to an endless regressive process of justification. In order to prevent this outcome, the rationale for the banning should then be firmly grounded instead in the ideal of party politics. This implies that, in liberal democratic polities, parties ought to resort only to legal and peaceful means (not to hatred or violence) for the promotion of the values and policies they endorse.

Also in this case, as for the first criterion, carefulness is necessary for empirically identifying those cases of hatred which really represent a danger for society and which may lead to intolerance and close-mindedness. Yet this simply implies, in my view, that the second reason provided by Rosenblum can be traced back to the first one. Only insofar as incitement to hatred leads to actual violence can it be adduced as a justification for banning a political party. Establishing the presence of this connection is merely an empirical problem. The crucial point is that, once we can confirm, with a strong degree of certainty, the presence of parties which advocate genuine hatred leading to violence, they ought to be banned because hatred is bad or tolerance and open-mindedness are good (although these would probably be sufficient reasons for most people), but mainly because such parties do not comply with the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter.

⁹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p. 435.

The third reason provided by Rosenblum is that political parties should be banned when they represent an existential threat to the state. I believe that this argument can also be easily traced back to the normative criteria of party politics, especially to the idea of loyal opposition. There are two problems arising from this third argument. One concerns the controversial implications of having to empirically assess the actuality of an existential threat to the state. The other is that the safeguarding of the identity of the state against those parties which aim to modify it (by peaceful means) “conflicts with interpretation and reinterpretation of political identity as part of the business of democracy. Existential threat as a justification for banning is an opening for essentialism. It bears traces of holist antipartyism”.¹⁰

Rosenblum briefly mentions, for example, the case of Turkey, where the Constitutional Court has often referred to the principle of secularism as a justification for banning Islamist political parties by considering them existential threats to the state.¹¹ The crucial problem with this approach, Rosenblum highlights, is that “Turkish separation of state and religion is one-directional, though; government is protected from religion but not vice versa”.¹² I do not intend to address this subject here as it will be the topic of the tenth chapter. For now, the main implication of Rosenblum’s analysis is that we might have to be careful in establishing when there is a legal and legitimate contestation of the existing political framework and when, instead, there is a clear attempt to subvert that framework. Once again, this is an empirical issue, not a normative one. Once it has been ascertained that a party represents an existential threat to the state, then it may be concluded that that party is not abiding by the principle of loyal opposition that political parties ought to comply with and therefore should be banned.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.440.

¹¹ Ibid., p.441.

¹² Ibid., p.442.

This critical analysis of Rosenblum's account therefore shows that normative arguments, concerning the acceptable limits of party politics, can be drawn from the ideal conception of political parties that I presented in the first chapter. Loyal opposition, acknowledgment of pluralism and commitment to gaining power only through the legal means established by the regime in which they operate (e.g. in liberal democratic polities, through elections but not through violence) are the criteria parties ought to comply with in order to preserve their unique bilingual nature. Those parties which fail to abide by them should be banned.

A clarification is required at this point. A party does not need to infringe all the normative criteria of party politics, in order to be banned. Theoretically, in a liberal democratic polity there might be, for example, a party which uses violent means in order to gain power, while still displaying loyal opposition (e.g. by not aiming to subvert the system in which it operates) and respecting pluralism. There might also be a party which aims to gain power through elections, displays loyal opposition but then reduces the space for party pluralism once in power (e.g. by introducing further criteria for banning rival political parties). Finally, a party might aim to gain power through elections, while respect party pluralism, only in order to subvert the existing constitutional and institutional framework once in power, thus contravening loyal opposition. Certainly these three ideal situations are unlikely in the real world. Most of the time, parties which threaten liberal democratic institutions are likely to display two or all these features. From a normative perspective, however, it is not necessary that a party contravenes all the three criteria. The infringement of only one of the normative criteria of party politics warrants the banning of a political party.

The present analysis also reveals the importance of contextualization when deciding whether a party should be banned. Perhaps only the first criterion illustrated by Rosenblum, i.e. violent opposition, does not require a specific contextualization unless, of course, we want to raise the question of what counts as violence in different historical, institutional and political contexts. In liberal democratic polities, for example, violence is certainly banned from party politics. However, we could at least imagine a regime in which violence was considered a legitimate means for

pursuing political power. Yet this would almost radically contravene the way we commonly intend political parties, as testified by the list of definitions that I provided at the beginning of the first chapter.

The second and third criteria illustrated by Rosenblum, i.e. incitement of hatred and existential threat to the state, require instead a careful assessment before being used as reasons for banning certain parties. For instance, when we consider the third criterion (as the example of Turkey provided by Rosenblum shows), states may arbitrarily use the existential threat argument in order to prevent any questioning of the political status quo, and of the institutional and constitutional framework, even when the latter may have lost the support of a considerable section of society. It is therefore important to contextualize the criteria proposed by Rosenblum in relation to variables such as the institutional framework of the relevant polity, the solidity of its democratic institutions and the effective size and strength of the allegedly dangerous party. A small religious extremist party, questioning the existing state institutions, operating within a strongly democratic environment, is certainly less dangerous, for example, than a similar party of larger dimensions operating within a more fragile democratic regime. These contextual aspects must be carefully considered each time the decision to ban a party is taken into account. Moreover, as I will show in the second section of this chapter, there may often be normative grounds for tolerating the presence of allegedly antidemocratic or anti-system parties within democratic polities. Such parties might often represent a minimal threat to democracy but, at the same time, they might contribute to its constant renewal and self-criticism as well as to the moderation of extremist claims. Balancing the two elements of this trade-off may often be crucial in order to decide what action should be taken and, consequently, to decide the fate of a democratic polity.

Justifying the Banning of Political Parties: Samuel Issacharoff

Samuel Issacharoff¹³ is the only other author, apart from Rosenblum, to have examined the rationale for banning political parties from a normative perspective. Issacharoff highlights how democracies have usually adopted several responses to

¹³ Issacharoff, "Fragile Democracies".

the threat presented by antidemocratic parties. The most common include the exclusion of extremist parties from electoral competition (but not their banning), the restriction of the views and values that parties may advocate (both within and outside electoral campaigning) and the complete banning of antidemocratic parties.¹⁴

The prohibition of certain parties is a radical response to antidemocratic behaviour. Issacharoff also emphasizes how the set of criteria for excluding certain parties “generally reflects the birth pangs of that particular society”.¹⁵ By defining the legitimate limits of democratic politics, that is, the constitutional arrangement of most countries also sets the limits for legitimate party politics. Consequently, “many countries prohibit political participation by parties that do not share the fundamental aims of the constitutional order”.¹⁶ More specifically, Issacharoff distinguishes three rationales for the banning of parties: prohibitions concerning “terrorist or insurrectionary groups”,¹⁷ those regarding “parties that align themselves with regional independence forces...that take a political stance opposing the continued territorial integrity of the country”¹⁸ and prohibitions directed to parties which challenge the liberal democratic values embodied in the constitution, while endorsing electoral competition and majority rule. Whereas the former two, Issacharoff argues, are nothing but “minority attacks on the polity”,¹⁹ the third represents the greatest danger for democratic polities.

Terrorist, insurrectionary and separatist parties, according to Issacharoff, are very unlikely to come into power and any decision to ban them “must stand or fall in relation to their commitment to peaceable as opposed to paramilitary forms of struggle for national separatism”.²⁰ This subtle distinction highlighted by Issacharoff can be traced back, once again, to the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter. In this sense, terrorist and insurrectionary groups clearly display an infringement of the idea that parties ought to pursue power via

¹⁴ Ibid., p.1409.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.1430.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.1430.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.1432.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.1432.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.1433.

²⁰ Ibid., p.1442.

legal means. In the case of separatist parties, what matters is not their goal of secede from the polity in which they operate but the way they pursue such a goal. A party, that is, may advocate greater autonomy for a determined region (or even independence) while acknowledging the legitimacy of the political framework in which it operates and attempting to achieve its goal solely through the legal means established by that framework.²¹ This kind of separatist party would be fully compatible with the normative criteria of party politics. In a liberal democratic polity, therefore, a party ought to accept the idea that the region for which it advocates greater autonomy or independence can legitimately become more autonomous or acquire independence only if this decision is democratically approved by all political parties (as representative of the citizens) or, in any case, through the democratic legal procedures of ordinary and constitutional politics (e.g. a referendum). A party which does not embrace this approach, but rather pursues regional autonomy and independence through terrorism or war, may legitimately be banned as it does not comply with the normative criteria of party politics and renounces its bilingualism. A similar argument could be made regarding those parties which pursue a double-edged strategy, by participating in democratic party politics while supporting parallel terrorist groups.²² Also in this case, the behaviour of such parties would contravene the normative criteria of party politics.

Besides insurrectionary and separatist parties, Issacharoff examines what he considers the most problematic case, namely parties which “seek to use majoritarian democratic processes to dismantle liberal democracy, as in the case of Islamic parties seeking majority status for purposes of imposing clerical law”.²³ He uses, as an example, the banning of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP) in 1997 by the Turkish Constitutional Court, on the basis of the party’s alleged Islamist political claims and anti-secular attitude. I will extensively analyse the relationship between religious parties and secular establishment in Turkey in the tenth chapter. For now, I would like to focus on what Issacharoff has to say regarding the approach to the case

²¹ One example is the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the UK.

²² See Thomas Ayres, “Batasuna Banned: The Dissolution of Political Parties Under the European Convention of Human Rights”, *Boston College International & Comparative Law Review*, Vol.27, No.1 (2004), pp.99-113.

²³ Issacharoff, “Fragile Democracies”, 1442.

of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The ECHR, he explains, condemned both the RP's intention to establish a plurality of legal systems based on different religious creeds, analogous to the Ottoman millet system, and its appeal to the Islamic *Shari'a* (i.e. the body of Islamic religious law which regulates public and private aspects of the lives of Muslims). Both were seen by the ECHR as jeopardizing democracy. The crucial point, yet, is that "[a]t no point did the ECHR demand proof of the imminence of democracy's demise".²⁴ In other words, the ECHR endorsed the RP's banning ruled by the Turkish Constitutional Court without any evident proof that the party was in fact about to challenge the democratic system.

This aspect points to a crucial question which arises when dealing with antidemocratic parties, namely how a democracy should deal with a party that declares it is democratic but in fact looks suspiciously antidemocratic.²⁵ This problem is even more evident when we consider that "[r]elatively few parties openly announce their antidemocratic objectives. More typically...the antidemocratic nature of the party must be inferred from subtle contextual clues".²⁶ Here Issacharoff seems to conflate two separate problems. The antidemocratic goals of a party may be hidden (and, therefore, may have to be inferred) in two different meanings. They may simply remain concealed under the party's official line before or during electoral campaigns. In this case, Issacharoff is right in suggesting that such antidemocratic tendencies should be deduced from specific hints in the party's behaviour. Yet the antidemocratic goals may be "hidden" in the sense that they are deferred until the party is in power. The party may thus campaign on the basis of a democratic platform, in order to be elected, and then use its legitimately obtained power to implement an antidemocratic agenda.²⁷ This is the main risk that any genuine democratic regime runs. Having renounced monistic conceptions of truth and embraced pluralism, modern democracies contain "the possibility of failure".²⁸ I am going to address this problem in the next section.

²⁴ Ibid., p.1445.

²⁵ Ibid., p.1458.

²⁶ Ibid., p.1459.

²⁷ See Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.76, No.6 (1997), pp.22-23.

²⁸ Gregory H. Fox and Georg Nolte, "Intolerant Democracies", *Harvard International Law Journal*, Vol.36, No.1, Winter (1995), p.15.

Political Parties, Hidden Antidemocratic Agendas and Performative Self-Contradiction

Issacharoff argues that “[t]he real definition of democracy must turn on the ability of majorities to be formed and re-formed over time and to remove from office those exercising governmental power”.²⁹ Therefore allowing a greater role for religion in the public sphere, Issacharoff claims, is compatible with the renewability of consent which is crucial for elections and democratic politics. Reversible democratic decision-making, willingness to be voted out of office and renewability of consent are, for him, the crucial traits of electoral and democratic politics. Elections, he argues are “the best mechanism for ensuring the consent of the governed”.³⁰ Yet commitment to renewability of consent is also a normative criterion of party politics. As I explained in the first chapter, political parties ought to seek power only through legal rather than violent means (e.g. terrorism, war etc.)³¹ and ought to be ready and willing to be voted out of office on the same grounds. In ideal terms, “partisans do not look to liquidate, erase or permanently disorganize the opposition...[P]artisans do not see minority status as irreversible...Partisans in the majority, too, recognize that their standing is partial and temporary...[P]artisanship entails commitment to the provisional nature of political authority”.³² This implies that the crucial criterion for banning political parties must appeal not merely to their willingness to take part in elections and only obtain power through elections, but also and especially to their readiness to be voted out of office and democratically accept that outcome. The criterion of reversibility, according to Issacharoff, also applies to specific political measures. Certain policies proposed, for example, by religious parties admit reversibility (e.g. state support of church schools) whereas others do not (e.g. excluding nonbelievers from public office). Renewability of consent and reversibility of policies provide therefore an additional normative criterion, grounded in the normative ideal of party politics, for establishing whether a party ought to be banned from democratic politics.³³

²⁹ Issacharoff, “Fragile Democracies”, p.1464.

³⁰ Ibid., pp.1464-1465.

³¹ See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp.24-5.

³² Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.363.

³³ Ibid., p.1465. This point anticipates the analysis of the link between party politics and pragmatist deliberation that I will conduct in chapter 6.

This has important implications when dealing with those parties which accept renewability of consensus, propose revisable policies while campaigning, and then refuse to be voted out or implement non-revisable policies once in power. In order to judge the behaviour of such parties, it is not necessary to appeal, for example, to the intrinsic value of democracy as we would then have to justify the latter on further normative grounds. Instead, we should simply appeal to the ideal of party politics that I presented in the first chapter and the normative criteria that stem from it. This might not help to resolve the empirical issue involved here, i.e. to foresee whether a party, which rhetorically endorses democracy, will be faithful to its claims once in power. Yet it provides a normative criterion for explaining why it ought to remain faithful to those obligations. Certainly this does not eliminate the fact that we should provide, wherever possible, the “proof of the imminence of democracy’s demise”³⁴ that the ECHR, as shown earlier, did not seek when dealing with the RP case in Turkey.

My analysis could also be reconceptualized in this way. Insurrectionary and separatist parties, which promote their goals through violence or without respecting the common framework in which they operate, do not comply with the ideals of loyal opposition and the fine balance between partiality and unity, particular and general principles they ought to abide by in order to preserve their unique bilingual nature. I would like to define the behaviour of these parties “latitudinal factionalism” as it concerns the metaphorically “spatial” dimension of party politics. These parties are only concerned with representing a fragment of the political spectrum. They ignore the other parts and the unity of the whole. They either want to secede from the polity or impose their factional views upon it. They are intrinsically divisive and contribute to weakening the unitary polity.

Parties which accept electoral competition but not renewability of consensus and reversibility of policy decisions are instead guilty of what I define “longitudinal factionalism”, i.e. a factionalism which invests the temporal dimension. Rather than promoting a factional interest and violently imposing it upon the whole polity, they

³⁴ Ibid., p.1445.

promote a partisan interest, which may even be widely and democratically endorsed, but through a “one-way” process. They forfeit the openness to challenges which the normative criteria of party politics impose and, most importantly, they disregard the temporary nature of both majority and minority status, the principle that, ideally speaking, “partisanship entails commitment to the provisional nature of political authority”.³⁵ By preventing a return to the *status quo ante*, and refusing to face the unpredictable political challenges which come from the future, these parties lock themselves into a tiny perpetual present, thus foregoing the dynamism that political parties ought to display. Both forms of factional degeneration represent therefore a denial of the normative criteria of party politics.

This confirms once more why it is so important that parties ought to abide by the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter. Although we can sometimes assess with some confidence the probability that an apparently democratic party will become antidemocratic once in power, there is no way, it must be reasserted, to foresee this with certainty. Adolf Hitler himself, for example, “swore under oath in court that he would seek and exercise power only by constitutional means”.³⁶ Rather than concentrating on assessing the probabilities of an undemocratic shift, then, a normative political theorist must above all attempt to establish on which grounds we can condemn this shift. Only this will help to justify any institutional measure (e.g. constitutional checks, police state, army intervention, banning of undemocratic parties etc.) suited to prevent this challenge or confront it if it arises.

Antidemocratic, Anti-System and Populist Parties

The analysis that I have conducted so far in the present chapter has therefore attempted to show the link between the ideal conception of political party that I presented in the first chapter and the normative question concerning the acceptable restrictions on party politics. My main line of argument, developed in relation to Rosenblum and Issacharoff’s accounts, has been that those parties which, within liberal democratic polities, do not comply with the normative criteria stemming from

³⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.363.

³⁶ Fox and Nolte, “Intolerant Democracies”, p.12.

that ideal, should be banned. By displaying what I have defined “longitudinal” and “latitudinal” factionalism, such parties renounce their bilingualism and therefore should be excluded from the realm of party politics. However, in the second part of this chapter I am going to examine whether there might be stronger normative reasons for tolerating such parties within liberal democratic polities. There is always a risk, it must be admitted, that an undemocratic party, presenting its views more or less openly in the public political realm, might obtain power through democratic means and then subvert democracy once in power. Yet we should balance this risk against the potential benefits of integrating “dangerous” parties into the democratic game.

In order to examine these issues more closely, in the second part of this chapter I will focus on a broad area of party scholarship which clearly highlights the empirical, conceptual and normative issues which characterize the relationship between political parties and democracy. This area of research, broadly intended, comprehends extremist right-wing (and, to some extent, left-wing) political parties which display allegedly undemocratic features. Some authors highlight the openly undemocratic or antidemocratic character of these parties. Others emphasize their “anti-system” and “semi-loyal” character, i.e. the fact that they may observe democratic norms only rhetorically but aim to subvert them in practice. Other scholars stress instead their populist nature and their monistic conception of the political community.³⁷ Analysing some of these accounts might help us to understand whether we should prevent such parties from operating within liberal democratic polities.

Political parties and Democracy

Many accounts of extremist or populist parties attempt to provide an exhaustive definition of the key features which characterize such parties. Disagreement is often present, between different authors, regarding the exact meanings of the labels

³⁷ For these classifications, see Roger Eatwell, “Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge”, in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.8ff.

“extremist”, “populist”, “radical” etc.³⁸ Yet all authors normally agree on a minimalist definition of political parties, analogous to the one that I presented in the first chapter. Cas Mudde, for example, defines a party as “*any political group identified by an official label that places candidates for public office through elections*”.³⁹ Piero Ignazi, instead, identifies parties with “those (somewhat stable) organizations that regularly compete for elections in Western Europe”.⁴⁰ Indeed a narrow definition is potentially able to accommodate a greater number of party features and party typologies than a thicker one.

Most accounts of anti-system, extremist and populist parties, however, fail to provide a clear and unbiased definition of democracy, often simply assuming that such parties are intrinsically undemocratic. I am not interested, at this stage, in distinguishing these different typologies of parties (e.g. radical, populist, anti-system) from each other. These differences will hopefully emerge from my subsequent analysis. What I am stressing is that failing to provide a satisfactory definition of democracy may lead to inaccurate conclusions regarding the relationship between these parties and democracy, and the acceptable (democratic) boundaries of party politics. In other words, there might be normative reasons why allegedly undemocratic or antidemocratic parties might in fact contribute in enhancing certain aspects of liberal democratic regimes.

Democracy has been defined in multiple ways throughout the centuries and there are still several strands in democratic theory today.⁴¹ The basic definition of democracy as “the rule of the people”, which goes back to the semantic roots of the term, has been interpreted and implemented in endless different ways, often raising the question of whether democracy means anything at all. Both the term “rule” and the term “people” have been attributed diverse meanings, thus leading to the conception of very different models of democracy, e.g. direct vs. representative democracy,

³⁸ See Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.11-31.

³⁹ Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.1 (italics in original).

⁴⁰ Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.26.

⁴¹ See Michael Saward, *Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), pp.1-31.

elitist democracy, deliberative democracy etc.⁴² Although this may make it difficult to define democracy in an uncontroversial way, it can at least help to avoid identifying democracy tout court with a specific democratic model, e.g. liberal/representative democracy. The importance of this distinction will become clearer later in the chapter.

The controversial and ambiguous meaning of democracy is also testified by the fact that even those political actors which are ordinarily considered undemocratic in the everyday political discourse emphasize the goodness and positive aspects of democracy. It is difficult to find political parties which openly reject democracy tout court, at least rhetorically. More often, these political actors simply aim to fight the “flawed” version of democracy in which they operate and to replace it with the “true” democracy that they represent. Certainly some extreme right parties (e.g. Fascist and National Socialist), at least in the past, have rejected not merely a specific (e.g. liberal) kind of democracy but democracy tout court, i.e. “the fundamental principle of the sovereignty of the people”.⁴³ Many contemporary extreme right and populist parties, however, claim to be the authentic representatives of the people, who are systematically ignored by the mainstream political establishment.⁴⁴ For instance the French National Front (*Front National* - FN), an extreme right party, does not reject democracy tout court. Instead it invokes a democratic model alternative to representative democracy and characterized by a strong Presidency and by the systematic use of referenda as channels of expression for “the will of a re-forged holistic French people”.⁴⁵ This may certainly be inconsistent with certain basic tenets of liberal democracy (e.g. individual and minority rights). Yet it might be more difficult to argue that the FN’s approach is undemocratic. It simply invokes a more direct model of democracy (than the one within which it operates), perhaps lacking some of the checks and balances which characterize liberal democratic regimes but not calling for the total demise of democracy itself. Several other extreme right parties, such as the German Republicans (*Die Republikaner* - REP), the Belgian Flemish Block (*Vlaams Blok* -

⁴² David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), pp.1-8.

⁴³ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.31.

⁴⁴ Eatwell, “Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge”, p.3.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.6.

VB) and the Dutch Centre Party (*Centrumpartij* - CP) have constantly invoked direct democracy as a means for giving back the power to the people.⁴⁶

We might therefore argue that parties such as the FN or the REP do not intrinsically reject democracy. In fact, they instrumentally endorse representative democracy and use it to pursue a political agenda which would culminate with the establishment of a more direct democracy. This suggests that the antidemocratic label often attached to such parties is not entirely justified. These parties tend to make a distinction between liberal (representative) and direct democracy, and to endorse the latter as it provides a better way of translating the will of the people into political power. However, most of them are willing to accept to work within the limits and through the mechanisms of representative democracy in order to pursue their direct democracy project.⁴⁷

This makes it difficult to consider such parties dangerous for democracy tout court. Yet it might plausibly be argued that it would be difficult to conceive a democratic regime lacking the check and balances, and the protection of individual rights from government power, which characterize liberal democratic polities. The kind of democracy these parties advocate can thus be considered incompatible with basic liberal democratic principles. As the polities in which the parties examined here operate are liberal democratic, it might be concluded that these parties should be banned as they do not comply with the normative criterion of loyal opposition political parties ought to abide by. Indeed, most extreme right parties invoke a “nativist democracy”, i.e. the idea that “a state should comprise ‘natives’ and that ‘nonnatives’ are to be treated with hostility”.⁴⁸ In this conception, the political community is identified with the indigenous ethnic community and therefore immigrants and strangers are excluded from democratic politics. The ideas of an “ethnic democracy” and an “ethnic referendum” crucially violate key elements of liberal democracy, such as individual and minority rights.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, p.56, pp.112-113 and pp.162-163.

⁴⁷ Eatwell, “Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge”, p.8.

⁴⁸ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.138. See also Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, p.113, p.163.

⁴⁹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.155.

However, there might be two answers to this argument. First, as I explained, such parties normally pursue their goals via legal means, i.e. they participate in elections rather than performing insurrectionary or terrorist activities. Furthermore, they acknowledge the legitimacy of the liberal democratic frameworks in which they operate, while aiming to replace them with more direct forms of democratic rule once in power. Therefore there are no normative grounds, we might argue, for excluding these parties from democratic politics on the basis of an alleged undemocratic or antidemocratic attitude. We must accept that democracy is a multilayered concept which also includes the variants invoked by many extreme right parties. These parties should therefore be allowed into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities.

Indeed, even if we consider non-extremist parties, different conceptions of democracy might lead to different classifications of antidemocratic parties. A minimal procedural conception of democracy, for example, characterized by free elections, full suffrage and civil liberties, would result in considering very few parties undemocratic. However, a more expansive conception, including economic, social and cultural rights, would certainly increase the number of antidemocratic parties.⁵⁰ Differences would also emerge depending on the specific polity considered. A party opposing advanced welfare rights, for example, would certainly be considered antidemocratic in Norway, where the dominant conception of democracy involves also social and economic rights, but not in the United States, where democracy normally has a narrower meaning.⁵¹ Any attempt to individuate antidemocratic parties is therefore rendered problematic by the multilayered meaning of democracy and by the variety of models of democracy. Contextualization, in these circumstances, is very much needed.

Furthermore, democracy is often attributed an intrinsically positive connotation and “a legitimacy-conferring capacity”;⁵² this makes it difficult to find political actors willing to completely reject it. Even dictators often appeal to democracy in order to

⁵⁰ Giovanni Capoccia, “Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol.14, No.1 (2002), pp.19-20.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.21.

⁵² Saward, *Democracy*, p.3.

confer credibility and legitimacy to their rule, emphasizing how their regime replaces “fake” with “true” democracy.⁵³ The by-product of this tendency to stretch the meaning of democracy is that the term has acquired a very broad and vague connotation. This makes it difficult to set the boundary beyond which claims to democracy cannot be accepted and prefixes can no longer be attached to it.⁵⁴ It also shows that democracy is somehow a scalar value. We might be able to judge different parties or regimes more or less democratic but it might be difficult to draw a clear line to establish where democracy ends and undemocratic behaviour begins.

Nevertheless, for the sake of my argument, I will take for granted that the kinds of parties examined here ought to be banned because they reject the basic tenets of the liberal democratic regimes in which they operate, therefore infringing the normative criterion of loyal opposition.⁵⁵ Still the adoption of extreme pre-emptive measures (e.g. banning) against such parties might drastically restrict the boundaries of democratic partisan politics. Indeed the discrimination against a political actor (e.g. an extreme right party) on the basis of its ideology risks leading to authoritarian outcomes.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the kind of political extremism embodied by the old totalitarian ideologies of the 1920s and 1930s has nowadays faded.⁵⁷ This makes it paradoxical that most European democracies still decide to deal with extremist threats by adopting a “militant” approach, characterized by state repression and special legislation against such parties.⁵⁸ Indeed in most European countries in the 1920s and 1930s, democracy “was ‘killed from above’, rather than ‘taken from below’”.⁵⁹ It was often the government in charge, or the institutional elites, that suspended democratic rights and guarantees in order to prevent the rise of extremist parties. Only in a few cases (Fascists and Nazis) did extremist parties gain power by playing the democratic game. Furthermore, contrary to Fascist, Nazi and Communist parties in inter-war Europe, extremist parties in contemporary Europe have often

⁵³ Ibid., p.3.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.4.

⁵⁵ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.31.

⁵⁶ Giovanni Capoccia, “Defence of Democracy in Inter-War Europe: A past Still Present?”, in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p.85.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.104.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.104.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.86.

been integrated into the democratic game.⁶⁰

I would therefore argue that the adoption of pre-emptive (antidemocratic) legislation aiming to restrict the legitimate boundaries of party politics, in order to prevent the risk of extremist parties gaining power through democratic means, should be treated very carefully. On the one hand, it could lead to antidemocratic authoritarian outcomes, therefore defying the scope itself of such measures. On the other hand, it would prevent the process of moderation and democratization that extremist parties might undergo, if allowed to enter democratic politics. Pluralistic deliberation conducted through political parties can be a vital instrument for channelling religious claims into the public political realm in a way that favours democracy. Participation in party politics can have a formative effect upon societal demands, including extremist ones, originating a process of “democratic acculturation”.⁶¹ Once an extremist group has made the initial minimal effort of creating a party and entering the democratic game, this process might often contribute in increasing its compliance with the rules and constraints of democratic electoral politics. From a merely instrumental perspective, its members might soon realize that it is rewarding (e.g. in terms of consensus, public recognition etc.) for them to abide by the rules of party politics, unless they wish to abandon party politics and pursue their objectives through non-partisan means (e.g. terrorist movements, interest groups, church activity etc.). From a normative perspective, however, what matters most is that the members of the newly created party become subject to the normative criteria of party politics. They might soon learn that they ought to display loyal opposition and “recognize that they are ‘parts’ of an overarching system and that the elimination of others is neither possible nor desirable”.⁶² Through this learning process, parties might therefore become more respectful of liberal democratic institutions.⁶³

However, even before this learning process is enacted, we might argue that entering

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.103.

⁶¹ Nancy L. Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.41.

⁶² Ibid., p.41.

⁶³ See Eldon Eisenach, *The Next Religious Establishment: National Identity and Political Theology in Post-Protestant America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp.40-41 (italics in original).

party politics represents in itself “a minimal effort to cast goals in terms that apply beyond themselves, to argue that what is good for the group is also a public good”.⁶⁴ Especially if the founders of a party are aware of the normative criteria of party politics, by creating a party they implicitly commit to becoming subject to those criteria. Even if they decide not to comply with them, they provide us with strong normative grounds for criticizing their behaviour and, in extreme cases, for banning them from democratic politics. In this sense, parties cannot simply be imposed from above (e.g. by the state) in order to moderate religious or other particularist claims and convey them into the public political realm in a way that favours democracy. Only the minimal effort to create a religious party, and therefore the voluntary character of party politics, can justify the virtuous circle of democratic acculturation. The state may facilitate this process, e.g. by opening the public political realm to such parties or by providing them with financial support, but it cannot take the initiative of politicizing religious or other societal groups without undermining this process

Liberalizing party politics, by allowing particularist (i.e. religious, ethnic etc.) parties to be formed, might lead to a “virtuous cycle” of democratization⁶⁵ and to the gradual moderation of the comprehensive views and values conveyed by these parties. Democracy and electoral competition might have a formative role and trigger political integration. Allowing such parties to enter party politics, therefore, might contribute in moderating and democratizing their claims.⁶⁶ Religious groups entering party politics, for example, might soon realize that they ought to “accept that they are not the one and universal faith”.⁶⁷ Being subject to these normative constraints is certainly more likely to render such parties more moderate. If left to pursue their goals outside the realm of party politics, such groups might reinforce their idiosyncratic claims and therefore become more dangerous for democratic politics, as I will extensively illustrate in the seventh chapter. Party politics, I will explain

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.41.

⁶⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.452.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.452. For the idea of a virtuous cycle of self-enforcing moderation, see also Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Democracy and Religious Politics: Evidence from Belgium”, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.31, No.2, June (1998), republished in John T.S. Madeley (ed.) (2003), *Religion and Politics* (Dartmouth: Ashgate), p.211.

⁶⁷ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.452.

there, is especially valuable for conveying the transformative power of deliberation and guaranteeing an inclusive public debate open to particularistic (e.g. religious) claims

Perhaps, though, we should not ground an argument for tolerating the presence of allegedly “dangerous” or extremist parties in liberal democratic polities in the mere hope that they will in fact undergo a process of moderation as this conclusion might be contested on empirical grounds. Yet we might safely argue, as I will extensively in the seventh chapter when analysing religious parties, that the exclusion of extremist groups from democratic party politics is likely not to enhance their eagerness to compromise and negotiate on political matters and therefore become accustomed to democracy. If excluded from the public political realm, their views are not going to be exposed to public scrutiny and challenges and therefore they are more likely to be reinforced by a limited and self-referential deliberation. This may intensify divisions and render these groups even more disruptive of democratic politics.

Given the reasons illustrated here, there might not often be sufficient normative grounds for adopting antidemocratic or authoritarian measures in order to protect existing democratic regimes from extremist, allegedly antidemocratic parties. Once we have clarified the complexity of the term “democracy”, and its broad meaning, it becomes difficult to use the protection of democracy as an argument for limiting democracy itself and excluding certain parties from the democratic game. Democracy is a complex and multilayered concept, it can be reconciled with the ideologies and manifestoes of most political parties, including extremist ones. Unless a party rejects the basic democratic idea of electoral politics, we cannot exclude it from democratic politics simply because it endorses non-liberal forms of democratic rule.

However, even assuming that the kinds of parties examined here represent a threat to the liberal democratic polities in which they operate, we should be careful in weighing the risk of tolerating them versus that of excluding them from the

democratic game. Of course a party which openly invoked the total demise of political democracy, including the minimal criterion of electoral rule, should clearly be excluded from democratic politics, as soon as its goals were ascertained. This would be justified by the need to preserve the basic democratic framework. Yet, as I will illustrate more extensively in the next section, very few parties openly advocate this strategy, preferring instead to conceal their antidemocratic project behind an apparently democratic facade.

Anti-System and Semi-Loyal Political Parties

Several accounts in party politics literature focus on the so-called “anti-system”⁶⁸ and “semi-loyal” (or even “disloyal”)⁶⁹ political parties. There are two main sets of meanings normally attached to these concepts. First, “an anti-system opposition does not share the values of the political order within which it operates”.⁷⁰ Anti-system parties, that is, do not express an opposition on specific issues but an “opposition of principle”,⁷¹ i.e. a disloyal opposition, not complying with the normative ideal of party politics. They display an ideological distance from the other parties along the political space and aim to delegitimize the regime in which they operate. Anti-systemness, in this sense, is a relational category.⁷² It indicates the relationship between a party and the regime in which it operates, i.e. in principle also a non-democratic regime. Anti-systemness, therefore, is not the same as anti-democraticness. Second, in democratic polities anti-system parties may observe democratic norms rhetorically but aim to subvert them in practice, their democratic standard style being “*in contrast with their ‘esoteric’ discourse and real behaviour*”.⁷³ The former aspect indicates the goal of anti-system parties, whereas the latter refers to the way such goals are pursued.

These two elements may combine to different degrees. The former is certainly

⁶⁸ Capoccia, “Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment”, pp.9-35.

⁶⁹ Juan J. Linz, “Elements of Breakdown”, in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes. Crisis, Breakdown, & Reequilibration* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp.14-49.

⁷⁰ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.133.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.133.

⁷² Capoccia, “Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment”, p.10.

⁷³ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, p.32 (italics in original).

indispensable for defining a party “anti-system”. Yet anti-system parties may present their anti-system views more or less openly. In liberal democratic polities, the greatest danger is represented by those parties which, as well as playing by the rules of the democratic game, do not present their (anti-system) views in public but aim to implement them once they have been democratically elected. Other parties, however, while preserving their anti-systemness and opposition of principle to the regime in which they operate, may also choose to fully present their views in public, therefore submitting them to the test of democracy and electoral politics. This may also confer greater legitimacy to their views, should they be endorsed on their merits by the electors.

Giovanni Capoccia⁷⁴ emphasizes how the label “anti-system”, within democracies, is especially used to describe those parties which play the democratic game with the objective of destroying it. Such parties may include older European totalitarian parties and contemporary radical Islamic fundamentalist parties in new democracies.⁷⁵ Yet, according to Capoccia, the presence of such parties is “a fundamental logical necessity, in democracies”.⁷⁶ As democracy represents the institutionalization of political dissent, “there can be, in abstract, no a priori limitation on the degree of dissent that an opposition can voice”.⁷⁷ Democracy, that is, must allow the presence of parties which reject the basic principles themselves of democracy, including the right to dissent. Put in different words, “[n]o regime, least of all a democratic regime, which permits the articulation and organization of all political positions, is without a disloyal opposition”.⁷⁸

This conclusion seems to entail that, contrary to what I have argued so far throughout the thesis, we should not ban those political parties which infringe the normative criterion of loyal opposition. However, we might have to distinguish, first, between those anti-system parties which present their views in public and those which conceal them until they are in power. The latter, I believe, contravene an important aspect of

⁷⁴ Capoccia, “Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment”, p.13.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.13.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.13.

⁷⁸ Linz, “Elements of Breakdown”, p.28.

democratic politics, i.e. the principle of publicity. Democracy certainly represents the institutionalization of political dissent. Yet, as deliberative democrats would certainly highlight, one of the crucial conditions of this is that dissenting opinions should be publicly expressed.⁷⁹ Indeed publicity “can screen out narrowly self-interested arguments”.⁸⁰ As clearly stated by Immanuel Kant, a maxim “which I cannot *publicly acknowledge* without thereby inevitably arousing the resistance of everyone to my plans, can only have stirred up this necessary and general...opposition against me because it is itself unjust and thus constitutes a threat to everyone”.⁸¹

Those parties which play the democratic game in order to impose their concealed undemocratic views once in power are therefore contravening one of the crucial tenets of democratic politics, i.e. the test of publicity. We can safely argue that such parties, should they openly present their views in the democratic arena, would most likely be rejected by the voters in a democratic electoral context. The fact that they choose to keep their views hidden from public view, with the intention of implementing them once in power, is a signal of their awareness that they would not pass the test of publicity. Therefore, although democracy “permits the articulation and organization of all political positions”,⁸² these parties are not actually articulating their views and positions. Articulating one’s views means expressing them and, consequently, offering them to public scrutiny. Capoccia’s argument might therefore have some weight for justifying and accepting, within democratic regimes, the presence of those anti-system and disloyal parties which are willing to present their views in public and to offer them to the test of public opinion. Yet it does not seem to provide valid arguments for accepting or justifying, on democratic grounds (i.e. as a logical necessity of democracy), those parties whose hidden agenda aims to destroy democracy by playing the democratic game.

⁷⁹ John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.45.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.45.

⁸¹ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, in Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, edited by H Reiss, translated from German by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1795] 1991), p.126.

⁸² Linz, “Elements of Breakdown”, p.28.

However, as I already suggested in the previous section, a democratic regime should be ready to take the risk of tolerating such parties. Democracy involves “the possibility of failure”⁸³ and pre-emptive measures to prevent the rise of anti-system parties with a hidden antidemocratic agenda should be carefully evaluated as they might risk leading to antidemocratic and authoritarian outcomes. Furthermore, any political party might theoretically adopt antidemocratic measures once it has gained power through democratic means. Therefore, if we had to pursue the pre-emptive measures route consistently, we ought to ban all political parties in democratic regimes, due to the potential risk that they might turn antidemocratic once in power. Moreover, we should always put emphasis on the process of democratic acculturation that party politics might contribute in fostering. By providing an inclusive political realm, and allowing party pluralism to flourish, we might render a greater service to democracy than by preventing “suspicious” parties from entering democratic politics and relegating them to the margins of political life, where their members would most likely pursue more dangerous and democracy-threatening avenues to achieve their goals.

There might also be another reason why we should not always ban anti-system parties, despite their lack of compliance with the normative criterion of loyal opposition which characterizes my ideal conception of party politics. Loyal opposition, I explained in the first chapter, presupposes in ideal terms a pre-existing constitutional and institutional democratic consensus. Only this makes it possible, for political parties, to promote particularistic conceptions of the good while respecting the political framework in which they operate, thus preserving their bilingualism. In the absence of this framework, parties may end up fighting each other over the very foundations of the regime in which they operate. They would be reduced to monolingual factions, with no common institutional idiom to share.

Sometimes, however, the constitutional and institutional consensus in which loyal opposition is grounded might weaken and the fundamental values of the polity might no longer be recognized as legitimate by the whole society. This might happen due to

⁸³ Fox and Nolte, “Intolerant Democracies”, p.15.

various reasons (social, historical, economical etc.). It is in these cases that anti-system parties are most likely to arise. They are the signals that the segment of society they represent no longer shares the institutional and constitutional consensus. Most importantly, the presence of anti-system parties may often signal that what had always been considered as the legitimate constitutional and institutional order of the polity, had in fact always lacked the support and consensus of a part of the population and, therefore, democratic legitimacy. This shows that parties can be important agents of democratic change. I will illustrate a clear example of this in the tenth chapter when I assess the case of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) in Turkey. The AKP, more than any other Islamist party in Turkey, has been trying to foster a democratization of Turkey's institutional framework by questioning the democratic legitimacy of Turkey's strongly secular constitutional arrangement.

Excluding anti-system parties from the political game of liberal democratic polities would therefore mean excluding one of its logically necessary components and preventing the political consensus from being reassessed in the light of these dissenting voices and of societal changes. Certainly in a genuinely democratic regime this kind of political reassessment is going to be an almost continuous process. This means that anti-system parties are likely to be present virtually at all times in democratic regimes, and to question the democratically established political consensus of the polity. Anti-system parties are therefore very much necessary for the health of democracy and for guaranteeing the pluralistic unanimity of party politics.

Once again, we should also recall that the process of democratic acculturation that I highlighted in the previous section, and which represents an important implication of party politics, might often contribute in integrating anti-system parties into the mainstream democratic framework of a polity. For example, the former Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano* – PCI), initially considered an anti-system party, especially after 1956 became increasingly committed to the principles of the Italian republican Constitution and to democratic rule. It gradually began to

conceive the socialist transformation of the Italian polity only as the result of a democratic process, not of an armed revolution.⁸⁴ This also led the PCI to rethink its long-term project of a socialist society in terms compatible with democracy. The leadership of the PCI, that is, gradually became more convinced that a democratic socialism would be possible in Italy.⁸⁵ Perhaps if the PCI had been excluded from the democratic game, rather than being allowed to integrate and undergo a process of democratic acculturation, the Italian democracy would have been seriously undermined.

Non-participation in party politics and the exclusion of particularistic claims from the democratic game is likely to lead to their radicalization. Political parties can contribute in providing a pluralistic deliberation able to channel and moderate religious and other perfectionist claims in a way that favours democracy. This was the main reason why I criticized Rawls's political liberalism in the first chapter. By excluding unreasonable views from the public political realm, I argued, his theory prevented the parties conveying such views from contributing to enhancing liberal democracy.

Monism, Populism and Political Parties

I would like to conclude this chapter by focusing on two further features which are usually attributed to extremist parties, especially right-wing ones, i.e. monism and populism. Extreme right parties are often considered carriers of holistic worldviews; they are “‘monist’ rather than ‘pluralist’, believing that there is only one true way”.⁸⁶ This approach can be traced back to the ancient Greece's holistic conception of the political community, which involved a rejection of divisions and factions.⁸⁷ As I extensively illustrated in the third chapter, monism is likely to lead to authoritarian forms of politics and, consequently, to prevent the institutionalization of political dissent, of which democracy and party politics are the clearest expressions.

In the ideology of extreme right parties, monism is tightly linked to the concept of

⁸⁴ See Giorgio Galli, *I Partiti Politici Italiani (1943-2004)* (Milano: BUR, 2001), pp.111-112.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.111.

⁸⁶ Eatwell, “Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge”, p.9.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.8.

“populist democracy”, i.e. the belief, already examined in this chapter in relation to direct democracy, “that the *volonté générale* should be implemented without any restrictions”.⁸⁸ This conception of democracy is rooted in the famous Rousseauian statement that the general will cannot “bind itself for the future”.⁸⁹ Populist radical right parties combine this view with their monistic outlook and, consequently, criticize established political parties, which are the clearest expressions of pluralistic dissent as well as of the mediated kind of politics which characterizes representative liberal democratic regimes.⁹⁰ Indeed many populist parties manifest an explicit anti-party attitude, they “are paradoxical in the sense that they are political parties that reject the legitimacy of parties”.⁹¹ In this sense, they “confront both the political pluralism that is the universal circumstance of parties and the actuality of parties. Their party is a means to erase or repress the rest”.⁹² They aim to re-establish a whole without parts, a polity without parties (except one). The one-party system that they aim to impose relies on philosophical holism and aims “to erase pluralism, above all partisan political pluralism”.⁹³

Populist parties endorse the following principles: the idea of plebiscitary politics (i.e. all decisions should be scrutinized by the people through referenda and people’s initiatives); the personalization of power and the call for a more personalized political system based on direct democracy, rather than on intermediate bodies and artificial divisions based on special interests; the primacy of the political, i.e. the idea that rule of the people should not be hindered by the rule of law (e.g. constitutional rights).⁹⁴ The result is “an extreme form of majoritarian democracy, in which minority rights can exist only as long as the majority supports them”,⁹⁵ a view certainly not compatible with the basic tenets of liberal democracy. Due to its monistic and plebiscitarian character, direct democracy may undermine the tolerance

⁸⁸ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.151.

⁸⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (translated from the French by Christopher Betts) (Oxford: Oxford University press, [1762] 1994), p.63.

⁹⁰ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.151.

⁹¹ Eatwell, “Introduction: The New Extreme Right Challenge”, p.12. See also Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p.34.

⁹² Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.35.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁹⁴ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp.151-155.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.156.

and compromise which characterize representative liberal democracies, as it does not provide guarantees for minorities and dissenting individuals. The systematic use of referenda may also weaken those intermediate bodies placed between state and civil society, such as political parties.⁹⁶

These points signal a crucial clash between populist parties' goals and the normative criteria of party politics. Their plea for a pure direct democracy, lacking any check and balances as well as the constitutional protection of individual rights, radically conflicts with the basic tenets of the liberal democratic regimes in which they operate. Furthermore, the unmediated kind of democracy they advocate irremediably conflicts with the mediating function party bilingualism ought to provide. As the almost paradoxical "anti-party" sentiment, displayed by these parties, testifies, their goals are in principle incompatible with the scope itself of party politics. The pure direct democracy they aim to establish once in power would no longer need political parties. Given their endorsement of political monism, and the essential irreconcilability of their conception of democracy with basic liberal democratic principles, it might therefore be concluded that populist parties ought to be banned from liberal democracies.

Nevertheless, as I have already explained earlier in this chapter, there might be normative grounds for treating any decision to ban such parties carefully. Any measure aiming to exclude certain parties from the political game of liberal democratic polities would potentially risk jeopardizing democracy from above. Furthermore, the parties considered here often have very small chances of gaining control of government within liberal democratic polities. Banning them might imply undermining democracy from above as well as relegating them to the margins of political life. This would prevent their views from being challenged and checked in public, thus precluding any potential process of democratic acculturation.

Furthermore, as in the case of anti-system parties, also populist parties might provide a positive contribution in liberal democratic polities. As highlighted by Margaret

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.155.

Canovan,⁹⁷ populist parties often remind us that even contemporary liberal democratic polities are characterized by both a “redemptive” and a “pragmatic” side. On the one hand, that is, politics is the everyday business of running complex societies in a complex world, by using institutions to limit power and make it effective. On the other hand, politics is a means of salvation, its ideal being that of direct popular government. When these two dimensions become too distant from each other, Canovan argues, populists enter this empty territory and promise to renew democratic politics.⁹⁸ Populist parties, that is, are there to remind us that democratic politics does need some occasional upsurge of faith as a means of renewal.

Populism, in this sense, makes similar claims to participatory and deliberative democracy, by emphasizing the importance of grassroots political participation, and of a transparent and direct relationship between popular will and political decisions.⁹⁹ Therefore populist parties might simply remind us of the potential flaws that liberal democratic regimes may sometimes present. These may include the lack of opportunities, for citizens, to channel their demands into the public political realm, the excessive concentration of power in the hands of an elite of representatives and, more generally, the lack of a transparent relationship between popular will and political decisions. Despite all their flaws, therefore, populist parties might still play an important role, as warning agents, for liberal democracies. We should take this aspect into account when deciding whether we should simply ban them because they partly contravene the normative criteria of party politics.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the normative problem of establishing the acceptable limits of party politics. In the first part, I focused on the relationship between my ideal conception of party politics and the criteria for banning political parties. In the second part, I focused more closely on antidemocratic, anti-system and populist parties which may represent a threat to democratic regimes. I concluded that,

⁹⁷ Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy”, *Political Studies*, Vol.47, No.1, March (1999), pp.2-16.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.15.

although these kinds of parties infringe the normative criteria of party politics, and therefore may represent a real threat for liberal democratic polities, there might often be stronger normative reasons for tolerating them. Allowing “dangerous” groups to create parties and enter democratic politics might therefore be the best way of reinforcing democracy itself. Excluding them may lead, on the one hand, to the radicalization of such groups, which may therefore become a greater danger for democracy and, on the other hand, to the adoption of antidemocratic and authoritarian measures which may destroy democracy from above.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, I will devise a normative theory of “deliberative perfectionism” and defend a model of democratic deliberation grounded on pragmatist epistemology. By analysing and playing against each other the work of Jürgen Habermas,¹⁰⁰ George Sher¹⁰¹ and Cheryl Misak,¹⁰² I will unveil the normative connections between a meta-ethical theory of pluralistic perfectionism and democratic deliberation. Sher, I believe, provides one of the most convincing and comprehensive contemporary defences of political perfectionism, also thanks to his systematic analysis and rejection of political neutrality. Habermas’s work is instead quite useful to my aim both for his pragmatist and deliberative account of the concept of “intentionality”, alternative to Sher’s, and for the distinction that he makes between ethical and moral discourses in public deliberation, a distinction that I will reject. Finally, Misak devises an innovative theory which, despite some flaws that I will highlight, provides interesting normative grounds for an inclusive and democratic conception of political deliberation. Despite its highly abstract character, this analysis will help me: a) to justify why deliberation is required for legitimizing the promotion of perfectionist values in the public political realm; b) to formulate an inclusive model of deliberation, overcoming the distinction between moral and ethical discourses defended by Habermas; c) to establish an intrinsic conceptual (and normative) link between perfectionism, deliberation and partisan identity.

¹⁰⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (translated from the German by William Rehg) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

¹⁰¹ George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰² Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000).

I will subsequently endorse a specific model of democratic deliberation grounded on pragmatist epistemology as it provides a more inclusive character than other deliberative models and offers sounder justifications for democratic deliberation. By establishing an intrinsic connection between truth, inquiry and experience, I will conclude, pragmatism provides the rationale for a democratic deliberation which mirrors some of the crucial characteristics of political parties, namely their tendency to submit themselves to the trial of elections and their inclination to present, assess and modify their policy proposals before other parties and the public. In this sense, this model provides the theoretical explication of certain democratic features that parties intrinsically possess, on the basis of the definition that I provided in the first chapter. Moreover, this model guarantees the presence of a set of basic rights establishing the legitimate limits of democratic deliberation and of the policy proposals that parties may be able to implement once in power. These basic rights are built within the process itself of deliberation, rather than being an insulated set of rights placed outside the deliberative process.

Chapter 5 - Deliberative Perfectionism: Why Should We Talk About the Good?

In contemporary political theory, perfectionists believe that the state should promote substantive conceptions of the good through its legislative action. Perfectionists provide various reasons for their claims: some of them emphasize the intrinsic value of certain human goals, traits and activities; others envisage a connection between the promotion of substantive conceptions of the good and the nurturing of individual autonomy. Supporters of neutrality, instead, claim that the state should refrain from legislating on the basis of substantive conceptions of the good. Some of them argue that the individual is the only or best judge of her interest; others claim that conceptions of the good are too controversial and cannot constitute valid grounds for political action; others, finally, emphasize that state perfectionism may threaten individual freedom and autonomy.¹

In this chapter I will analyse perfectionism in relation to Jürgen Habermas's² theory of communicative action. First, I will briefly examine Habermas's conception of deliberative democracy and the distinction that Habermas draws between moral and ethical forms of deliberation. Subsequently, I will analyse Habermas's idea of discourse in relation to the perfectionist model proposed by George Sher.³ In this way I will attempt to illustrate the convergence between the two perspectives and to provide the rationale for universal ethical discourses. I will argue that, by shifting from an ethical to a meta-ethical dimension, we can establish the legitimate grounds of a model of deliberation encompassing ethical matters (that is, questions

¹ For models of liberal neutrality see Bruce A. Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980); Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle* (London: Harvard University Press, 1985); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) and *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a). For critical accounts of liberal neutrality see William Galston, *Liberal Purposes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Roberto Unger, *Knowledge and Politics* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1975).

² Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (translated from the German by William Rehg) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996a).

³ George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

concerning the good life) not confined to the limits of specific communities or forms of life. Therefore, I will claim, political perfectionism must be conducted and legitimated through deliberation and discourse because discourse itself is involved in the way in which we establish, at the meta-ethical level, why and on which grounds something is valuable.

I will then argue, in the next chapter, that Cheryl Misak's⁴ pragmatist conception of democratic deliberation helps in overcoming some of the difficulties arising from George Sher and Jürgen Habermas's accounts. This theory, I will show, establishes an intrinsic connection between truth, inquiry and experience, and between perfectionism, pluralism and democracy. On the one hand, it offers normative grounds for endorsing an inclusive conception of the public political sphere. On the other hand, it provides the rationale for a democratic deliberation which mirrors some of the normative criteria of party politics, namely parties' requirement to submit themselves to the trial of elections and to present, assess and modify their policy proposals before other parties and the public.

Jürgen Habermas: Deliberative Politics and the Distinction between Ethical and Moral Discourses

Habermas⁵ intends to overcome two common paradigms of deliberative politics: the liberal one, in which "the government is represented as an apparatus of public administration, and society as a market-structured network of interactions among private persons",⁶ and the republican model, in which "politics is conceived as the reflective form of substantial ethical life".⁷ The former, according to Habermas, conceives the dualism between state and civil society as almost inescapable, due to the notions of justice and basic principles on which it is grounded. The latter relies instead on a pre-existing convergence of established ethical principles and conceives deliberative action as a mere means for self-understanding by an already identified

⁴ Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy", in S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996b), pp.21-30.

⁶ Ibid., p.21.

⁷ Ibid., p.21. See also Michael J Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.132.

ethical community. This is not compatible, Habermas argues, with the social pluralism which characterizes modern societies.⁸ Against liberal and republican paradigms, Habermas proposes therefore a discursive model of deliberative politics. In this model, what is institutionalized is not a set of basic rights insulated from opinion- and will-formation but a set of communication rules and procedures, different from substantive principles but still able to establish a common ground for intersubjective understanding and potential agreement.⁹ According to Habermas, reasonable pluralism can coexist with a shared reference to a common institutionalized vocabulary of communicative rules and procedures.

The main aspect of Habermas's conception of deliberative politics on which I would like to concentrate here is the distinction that he draws between moral and ethical discourses. The former, Habermas argues, concern questions of justice ("the right"), they can be entirely conducted through rational argumentation and admit the possibility of a universal consensus achieved by an (ideally) universal audience. The latter, instead, concern what is valuable ("the good") and, according to Habermas, can only be conducted within the horizon (cultural, historical etc.) of a specific community or form of life of which they express the specific "self-understanding".¹⁰

Habermas's main criticism towards the republican paradigm of deliberative democracy relies on the idea that modern societies do not really offer a uniform cultural and social background. Reasonable pluralism, according to Habermas, makes it difficult to identify political discourses with the self-understanding of a pre-existing ethical community. In a modern, deliberative democracy, according to Habermas, moral discourses and questions of justice should therefore have priority over ethical ones as they are not related to the specific milieu of a determinate

⁸ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.279. See also Iris M. Young, "Communication ad the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy", in S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p.125.

⁹ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.298.

¹⁰ See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society) (translated from the German by Thomas McCarthy) (London: Heinemann, 1984), p.20 and p.42; "Discourse Ethics: Notes on Program of Philosophical Justification" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp.43-115; "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employment of Practical Reason" in *Justification and Application* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp.1-17.

community. Instead, they refer to those matters which can be legally regulated according to an equal consideration of all, on the grounds of (and in harmony with) moral principles claiming universal validity.¹¹ The relationship between deliberation and ethical questions, in the kind of deliberative democracy that Habermas depicts, is therefore an indirect one. In plural and diverse societies, Habermas seems to argue, we cannot deliberate about the good as such but about the necessity of dealing with value pluralism (i.e. the fact that people endorse different conceptions of the good). This is the dimension of morality and justice in which, according to Habermas, discourses can claim universal validity.

Habermas highlights how, for Aristotle, “ethics could still provide orientation concerning the ontological conditions and the institutional framework of the good life”.¹² Yet post-conventional modern societies, he argues, no longer offer the same cultural homogeneity grounded in an uncontroversial metaphysical background and the possibility to establish a hierarchy of conceptions of the good on the basis of an ethical realism claiming universal validity.¹³ Moral discourses, instead, can claim universal validity on the grounds of rational arguments.¹⁴ In post-conventional societies, according to Habermas, we cannot agree upon a conception of the good (or a set of conceptions of the good) but only achieve a universal moral consensus for dealing with ethical diversity.

In order to devise the normative grounds for a more inclusive model of deliberation, I will now attempt to challenge Habermas’s strong distinction between moral and ethical discourses by focusing on the perfectionist theory devised by George Sher.¹⁵ While beginning from very different premises and questions, Sher, like Habermas, focuses on the discrepancy between an Aristotelian model of ethics and the postmetaphysical milieu of modern societies. Sher’s perfectionist model represents a

¹¹ Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy”, p.5. See also Habermas, “Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam’s Kantian Pragmatism”, in *Truth and Justification* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 228.

¹² Habermas, “Lawrence Kohlberg and Neo-Aristotelianism”, in *Justification and Application*, p.117.

¹³ For this point, see Habermas, “Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam’s Kantian Pragmatism”, p.225.

¹⁴ Habermas, “Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam’s Kantian Pragmatism”, p.231.

¹⁵ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*.

serious attempt to reconcile a universal model of ethical perfectionism with the absence of the metaphysical background necessary for justifying an essentialist ethics. While emphasizing some of the weaknesses of Sher's conclusions, I will attempt to replace the empirical grounds of his meta-ethical perfectionism with a discursive re-interpretation of the concept of "fundamental human goals" that he poses as the basis of his theory. This will enable me to reinterpret Habermas's idea of discourse by extending it beyond the limits of moral questions to include ethical matters. The realm of meta-ethics, I will conclude, represents the source from which both political perfectionism and deliberation stem and provides independent grounds for their legitimacy and reciprocal dependence in plural societies.

George Sher: a Critique of Political Neutrality

In *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, Sher pursues a twofold aim. In the first part, he carries out a critique of both consequentialist¹⁶ and deontological¹⁷ arguments for state neutrality, criticizing the idea of "prophylactic neutrality"¹⁸ as well as anti-perfectionist arguments grounded in the skepticism about the good.¹⁹ In the second part of his work, on which I will focus, Sher attempts instead to construct a non-communitarian perfectionist theory.²⁰ His purpose is to provide a version of plural perfectionism²¹ endorsing not one but several goods (i.e. knowledge, rational activity, close and valuable human relationships, moral goodness, developing one's abilities and awareness of true beauty) while tracing them back to a single, primary and independent source of value.

Sher believes that traditional attempts to provide a unifying meta-ethical source of

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.45-71. See also George Sher and William J Bennett, "Moral Education and Indoctrination", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.79, No.11 (1982), p.669.

¹⁷ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.72-105. For a critique of the deontological defence of autonomy see Vinit Haksar, *Equality, Liberty, and Perfectionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.178.

¹⁸ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.106-39.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.140-55. For a critique of "scepticism" as the justification for political neutrality, see Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.214-15.

²⁰ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.171-5. For models of communitarian perfectionism see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981) and Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²¹ For accounts of "plural perfectionism", see Joseph Chan, "Legitimacy, Unanimity, and Perfectionism", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.29, No.1 (2000), pp.5-42 and Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.395-9.

value present various inconsistencies. On the one hand, he examines nonteleological unifying theories of value, both subjective and objective. The former, according to Sher, are usually identifiable with hedonistic models; they are nonteleological as they locate the source of value in purely qualitative experiences (e.g. subjective pleasure). For this reason, Sher argues, they cannot in principle explain why certain things have value independently from the fact that experiencing them is pleasant for someone.²² Nonteleological objective theories, instead, envisage certain intrinsically valuable human activities and traits and seek to individuate a single property which belongs to all of them and may constitute the unifying source of their value.²³ Yet, Sher argues, the fact that some properties belong to every human being does not tell us anything about what human beings ought to do; it does not seem to have normative implications and it cannot provide valid unifying grounds for pluralistic perfectionism.²⁴

Contrary to nonteleological ones, according to Sher, teleological theories have the advantage of linking value to certain human goals thus establishing, at the same time, certain criteria of success that the pursuit of these goals must involve. In the case of subjective teleological theories, the goals are “embedded in (actual or hypothetical) desires or choices”.²⁵ For this reason, according to Sher, such theories “shed far less light on *which* traits, activities, and the like are more or less valuable”.²⁶ Even though they surely represent an improvement on hedonism, their being grounded in subjective desires and choices prevents them from establishing objective (or at least non-merely-subjective) criteria for value judgments.²⁷

²² Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.220. For an analysis of “pleasure”, see G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), pp. 76-7.

²³ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.220. See, for example, Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.17.

²⁴ A clear example is represented by biological human functions. Eating, drinking, sleeping etc. are surely part of every person’s human nature but, in themselves, they do not bear any purposive character.

²⁵ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.224.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.224 (italics in original).

²⁷ This seems to be the problem encountered by those doctrines of neutrality centred on the so-called “best-judge principle”. This maintains that the individual is in the best position to judge what is valuable and worthwhile for her and that, consequently, the state should leave her free to choose those conceptions of the good which best suit her. However, this does not seem enough to establish what the actual worth of certain activities or goods is in itself. For a critique of the “best-judge” principle see Simon Caney, “Consequentialist Defences of Liberal Neutrality”, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.41, No.165 (1991), pp.457-77.

The last major unifying doctrine of value analysed by Sher is Aristotelian essentialism, the clearest example of objective teleological theory. Instead of underlining certain human “properties”, Aristotelianism emphasizes that “*some* goals [i.e. not mere capacities] are essential to our nature”²⁸. The main problem with this teleological model is, for Sher, that “when Aristotle advanced his essentialist conception of human nature, it was part of a much larger world-picture that was teleological throughout”.²⁹ Aristotle’s objectivist perfectionism, then, needs to be contextualized within the historical and social milieu in which it developed; it cannot bear, according to Sher, a universal and a-historical validity. Sher emphasizes how “when claims about essential goals are advanced *without* metaphysical backing, their content and justification become obscure”.³⁰

Sher attempts to overcome the dichotomy illustrated so far and, as Thomas Hurka emphasizes,³¹ to find a “continuum” between subjectivist and objectivist theories of value. According to Sher, knowledge, moral goodness, developing one’s abilities, close human relationships, rational activity and awareness of true beauty are fundamental human activities.³² More precisely, they are the internal goals of certain fundamental human capacities. For example, Sher writes, one of our fundamental teleological capacities is that of understanding the world. This capacity always aims for the goal of true belief. Therefore, knowledge (intended as “reason-based true belief”³³) is a fundamental human goal as it represents the successful exercise of the fundamental human capacity “understanding the world”.³⁴

However, as well as individuating a number of human activities and traits valuable in

²⁸ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.225.

²⁹ Ibid., p.225.

³⁰ Ibid., p.226.

³¹ Thomas, Hurka, “Review: Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics”, *Ethics*, Vol.109, No.1, October (1998), p.190.

³² Sher partly borrows this list from Derek Parfit [Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.499].

³³ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.203.

³⁴ Ibid., pp.203-11. This helps to clarify in what sense Sher intends his theory as one of “inherent”, rather than “intrinsic” value. Sher does not believe that certain human traits or activities are intrinsically (i.e. in themselves) valuable but rather that “some activities, traits, and types of relationships are inherently valuable because they are implicated in certain very abstract goals that (virtually) all humans unavoidably seek” (ibid., p.11). Moreover, Sher adds, this allows saying that certain goals which are not in fact pursued near-universally and near-unavoidably should be pursued because they are “*derivatively* fundamental”(ibid., p.208, italics in original) in relation to those goals which are in themselves near-universal and near-unavoidable.

themselves, Sher emphasizes that a greater achievement would be that of envisaging a unique source and explanation to which these plural valuable human traits and activities could be traced back. In fact, he argues, a kind of “maximal pluralism”³⁵ content with admitting the existence of plural valuable goods seems to rely on mere “brute facts...that cannot be explained” and therefore it “may seem incapable of rational defence”.³⁶ For Sher, a sound perfectionist theory needs to explain why certain things are valuable.³⁷

Beyond Objectivist and Subjectivist Theories of Value: Intentional Value-Claims

In constructing his own unifying theory of value, Sher endorses a teleological conception analogous in some way to the Aristotelian model. He believes that fundamental human capacities are teleological in character and that what is valuable is not their mere exercise but rather their “successful exercise”, their actually achieving their defining goals.³⁸ On these grounds, not everyone possessing these capacities, but only those who exercise them successfully through certain activities, can be judged as having a good life.

However, in spite of his endorsement of a teleological theory, Sher also aims to find an alternative model to the subjective and objective ones that he criticizes. While defending the idea that values must bear a non-experiential, objective character, Sher also wants to explain how and why experiential (i.e. subjective) occurrences must not be overlooked.³⁹ This is where Sher’s theory, in my view, offers a radical change of perspective in comparison to traditional perfectionist approaches. Sher envisages a parallel between the structural features of teleological states and the implications of value-claims. Having rejected subjective and objective accounts of the unifying source of value, he detects a possible alternative source of value in those intentional

³⁵ Ibid., p.218.

³⁶ Ibid., p.218.

³⁷ Ibid., p.219.

³⁸ Ibid., p.202.

³⁹ See Hurka, “Review: Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics”, p.189. Sher claims indeed that “even if a goal is independent of an agent’s *desires and choices*, it need not similarly be independent of *the agent himself* ...it may belong to him so deeply that it lies beneath, or is presupposed by, all of his specific desires and choices” (*Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.236, italics in original).

states by which individuals claim that something is valuable.⁴⁰

Value-claims are certain intentional states of the form “I (attribute) value (to) *x*” where *x* represents the intentional object (i.e. the valued thing, activity, trait etc.). According to Sher, intentional value-claims are themselves teleological; they do not refer to some state of things in the world but rather to something which should be brought about in the world. Furthermore, their intentional character differs from that of nonteleological intentional states (e.g. beliefs). Although both teleological and nonteleological states are directed towards intentional objects, their “direction of fit” is radically different. Nonteleological states are such that their unfulfilment (e.g. in the case of a false belief) always calls for a change of the state itself (e.g. the belief). On the contrary, when a teleological intentional state (e.g. a desire or a value-claim) is unfulfilled, what is called for is a change in the world rather than in the intentional state.⁴¹

As Sher writes, “claims about value must be understood as singling out types of occurrences whose instances would have some special status, or would in some way be especially appropriate, if they *did* exist”.⁴² The object of an intentional attribution of value would be “a kind of further state”⁴³ somehow “fitting” that intentional value-claim. Moreover, according to Sher, the intentional objects of value-claims need not actually exist in the world. At the same time, however, “the world’s failure to contain a thing of the valuable type requires that *it* [i.e. the world] be altered to

⁴⁰ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.231-32. In order to avoid confusion, “intentionality” needs to be clearly distinguished from “intention”. Intentionality does not refer to the mere fact that we plan, or intend to do something. Instead, as Sher himself explains, it is a property of human consciousness by which every intentional state (e.g. every desire, choice, belief etc.) is always directed towards an intentional object (e.g. the thing desired, chosen, believed etc.). For an earlier account of “intentional mental states” see George Sher, “Sentences in the Brain?”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.36, No.1, September (1975), pp. 94-99.

⁴¹ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.231-33. For example, if I erroneously believe that the earth is flat, once I find out that my belief does not correspond to reality, I need to change my belief. On the contrary, if I desire, for example, that today it rains, the fact that it does not actually rain does not invalidate my desire. Even though I may decide to surrender it, the desire as such does not lose any of its validity. Similarly G. E. Anscombe, in reporting Aquinas’s view, underlines how “practical knowledge is ‘the cause of what it understands’, unlike ‘speculative’ knowledge, which ‘is derived from the objects known’” [Anscombe, *Intention*, p.87].

⁴² Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.232.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.232.

bring a thing of that type *into* existence”.⁴⁴ Given their intentional status, then, value-claims represent for Sher “the factual sources of value”, they “*give* valuable things their special status”.⁴⁵ This helps Sher to find the bridge between experiential (i.e. subjective) and non-experiential (i.e. objective) dimensions that the unifying theories of value he had previously rejected could not offer.

Inherent Value and Fundamental Human Goals

Yet the problem is that although intentional attributions of value provide the source for the valuableness (in general) of human traits and activities, therefore introducing a subjective, experiential dimension in Sher’s perfectionism (a dimension absent from essentialist theories), they do not specify which human traits or activities are to be considered inherently valuable. Intentional value-claims, that is, are not sufficient for identifying the fundamental goals of human nature in relation to which the inherent value of other goals and activities can and should be ascertained.⁴⁶ In other words, Sher’s account of the sources of value risks being question-begging, if it is not complemented by an analysis able to establish why certain human goals are fundamental (rather than others) and, therefore, why certain human activities are valuable (rather than others). In order to preserve an “objective” dimension in his theory, Sher attempts therefore to individuate certain nearly-universal and nearly-unavoidable human goals which may help to establish a limited set of inherently valuable human activities.

While rejecting Aristotelian essentialism, Sher endeavours to uncover the formal properties that fundamental human goals must fulfil. According to him, these requirements concern “depth” and “distance”. The former criterion requires that a fundamental goal must belong to a human being in a somehow deep sense. This excludes those “whims, impulses and spur-of-the-moment decisions”⁴⁷ whose

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.233 (italics in original).

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.232 (italics in original).

⁴⁶ In theory, intentional value-claims can be directed towards several human activities (e.g. “I value knowledge”, “I value counting tiles on the pavement”, “I value killing” etc.). People can attribute value to anything they wish. This, in spite of taking into account experiential occurrences (i.e. subjective choices, desires etc.), is not enough for establishing which, among the many things to which human beings attribute value, must be considered inherently valuable.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.234. The depth requirement also leads Sher to consider evolutionary theories non suitable

superficiality cannot constitute a valid ground for establishing or evaluating the goodness of a person's life. The latter indicates that a fundamental goal must be at some distance from the individual perspective of a single human being or of a limited group of individuals (e.g. a family, a nation etc.), in order for it to be attributed to humanity in general.⁴⁸ Given these criteria, Sher concludes that near-universal and near-unavoidable goals represent a fixed feature of human life. "When it is a goal", Sher writes, "that virtually no one can *avoid* pursuing - then questions about whether any or all of those persons ought to pursue it, or whether it is worthy of their pursuit, *simply do not arise*".⁴⁹ The importance of a similar kind of goal (near-universal and near-inescapable) is that it "is indeed a suitable touchstone for the evaluation of all other goals, including all other near-universal ones, whose pursuit is not similarly fixed".⁵⁰ For this reason, Sher claims, "the proposed theory represents the smallest philosophically acceptable departure from subjectivism".⁵¹ Once fundamental human goals (relative to fundamental human capacities) have been thus individuated, it is possible to establish the inherent value of those activities which consist in the successful exercise of those capacities, that is, in the achievement of those goals.

Sher also emphasizes how "[his] theory is perhaps best viewed as an empirical substitute for a teleological essentialism - a kind of poor man's Aristotelianism".⁵² According to him, indeed, "barring a return to a broadly teleological world-view, there is little a priori reason to believe that any particular goals are essential to humans, but much a posteriori evidence that various goals are at least near-universal and near-unavoidable".⁵³ It is interesting that Sher considers this "a posteriori evidence" as "supplied by introspection, by our own and others' verbal and nonverbal behaviour, and by many relevant background theories".⁵⁴

for providing the unique source of valuable human goals, as "the goals of evolution cannot be attributed to individuals in any straightforward sense" (ibid., p.239).

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.234-42.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.238 (italics in original).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.239.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.239.

⁵² Ibid., p.240.

⁵³ Ibid., p.242.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.242. If intended in the sense of a phenomenological enquiry grounded on the intentional character of our value-claims, "introspection" can indeed become the source of a posteriori evidence, not stemming from essentialist sources of validity. Yet one might envisage, as Sher himself does, the possibility of "a return to a broadly teleological world-view" (ibid., p.242). However, I believe, even

Habermas: Intentionality and Discourse

Sher's approach presents some difficulties which emerge clearly from the list of goods that he draws. Knowledge, rational activity, close and valuable human relationships, moral goodness, developing one's abilities and awareness of true beauty are surely intuitively appealing human activities. However, as Thomas Hurka suitably notes,⁵⁵ this list could in principle be extended to include also less intuitively attractive activities such as the pursuit of violence and aggression. Given the "empirical" grounds that Sher himself poses at the basis of his theory, we could at least imagine a world in which most men would in fact pursue violence, murder and other unattractive ends. This would also imply the paradox that if most men, hypothetically, did not pursue those goals achievable through knowledge or appreciation of art, then, according to Sher's theory, we would have to stop considering those activities good.⁵⁶ I believe that Hurka's critique is well-founded. In spite of the coherent and systematic way in which he constructs his theory of value, Sher partly misunderstands the implications of conceiving intentional value-claims as the factual sources of value.⁵⁷

In order to highlight the main difficulties in Sher's theory, and especially in his conception of intentional states, I will refer to the second of Habermas's *Christian Gauss Lectures*, delivered at Princeton in 1970/1971,⁵⁸ which partly deals with Edmund Husserl's⁵⁹ theory of intentionality. Habermas underlines how every

if fundamental human goals were considered expressions of a broader encompassing worldview, as in Aristotelian essentialism, the valuableness of such goals would always be comprehensible and relevant for human beings only as the intentional correlate of intentional value-claims. The unfeasibility, in principle, of exiting the terrain of intentionality makes Sher's account appropriate to the finitude of human nature.

⁵⁵ Hurka, "Review: Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics", p.190.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.190.

⁵⁷ In fact Sher seems to acknowledge potential problems implied by the idea of intentionality, when he writes that "there has, of course, been much controversy about how naturalists can best account for intentional content; but the very urgency of the controversy (and the unattractiveness of the eliminative alternatives) suggests that they must accommodate it somehow" (Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.232n).

⁵⁸ The title of the French translation that I will refer to is *Sociologie & Théorie du Langage* (translated from the German to French by Rainer Rochlitz) (Paris: Armand Colin Éditeur, 1995). The French title of the second lecture is "Phénoménologie de la Constitution de la Société" ("Phenomenology of the Constitution of Society"). Whenever I quote directly Habermas's text, I will use my own English translation of the French text. I will also provide the French text of the relevant passages in the footnotes.

⁵⁹ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (translated from the German

intentional state, for Husserl, is always constituted as “consciousness of something”.⁶⁰ Husserl distinguishes two main kinds of intentional states: those in which the intentional object is given to us directly, in itself, and those, instead, in which the object is only mediately offered.⁶¹ The main problem, according to Habermas, is that Husserl interprets this distinction as the difference between intuitive and non-intuitive “givenness” of an intentional object.⁶² The presence of an intentional object given in intuitive evidence, Habermas emphasizes, represents for Husserl the only source of truth. This implies that every intentional state can be fulfilled, according to Husserl, in the way representations, perceptions or similar intentions are fulfilled, that is by an intuition.

Husserl extends this cognitive model of intentionality also to those intentions which belong to the volitive or emotional sphere.⁶³ In this sense, then, he seems to overlook one aspect that Sher clearly underlines, that is, the different “direction of fit”, that I have previously illustrated, between nonteleological and teleological intentional states. However, for Habermas the problem is not merely that intuitive evidence can only satisfy certain kinds of intentional states (cognitive, representational etc. but not emotional, volitive etc.). It is, in addition, that even the former kinds (what Sher defines as “nonteleological intentional states”) cannot in fact be fulfilled and verified through mere intuition.

According to Habermas, every intuition, even mere perception, always involves a categorical interpretation which “exceeds” what is immediately given (for example, the sensorial data).⁶⁴ In this sense, he argues, we can in theory always proceed in more depth in order to find more elementary sensorial data as the primary grounds of our perceptual experience. The reason why intuition always appears to be evident, according to Habermas, is because in fact we have generated the categorical and symbolic objects that we encounter even in our mere perceptual experience; they are

by W.R. Boyce Gibson) (London: Allen & Unwin New York: Humanities Press, 1931).

⁶⁰ My translation of “conscience de quelque chose”, *Sociologie & Théorie du Langage*, p.34 (italics in original).

⁶¹ Ibid., p.34.

⁶² Ibid., p.35.

⁶³ Ibid., p.38.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.41.

never given to us “in flesh and bones”⁶⁵ as Husserl believes. The lack of an intuitively given final foundation of truth offering to us an object in flesh and bones implies, according to Habermas, the need to switch from a “theory of consciousness” to a “theory of language”.⁶⁶ Embracing the pragmatist epistemology of Charles Sanders Peirce,⁶⁷ Habermas argues that the kind of validity claimed by intentional states can only be fulfilled not by a possible intuition which would give us truth-as-evidence, but by an unconstrained discourse aiming for a consensus achieved through rational argumentation.⁶⁸

From Empirical to Discursive Foundations: A New Theory of Value

Habermas’s discursive theory of the fulfilment of intentional states provides an important conceptual key for reinterpreting Sher’s notion of teleological intentional states, such as value-claims (i.e. attributions of value). Sher still conceives intentional value-claims as allowing a somehow intuitive fulfilment. However, it is not clear to me how a valuable thing would have to be given in the world in order to fulfil the intentional value-claim which provides the source of its value. I believe that this is not clear to Sher either. This is why his theory runs into the difficulties emphasized by Hurka. Once he has identified the factual source of valuable human activities with intentional value-claims, Sher is then constrained to adopt an empirical approach in order to select those goals which can be granted a near-universal status and therefore help to establish the inherent value of certain human activities and traits.

⁶⁵ My translation of “en chair et en os” (ibid., p.41). If this is relevant for cognitive and representational intentions, it will be even more significant, I believe, for all those non-cognitive intentional states to which Husserl improperly extends the “intuition-as-evidence” paradigm. As we have already seen, the direction of fit of these kinds of nonteleological intentional states (e.g. desires, attributions of value etc.) entails, for Sher, that the “independent variable” is in the states themselves and the “dependent” one in the world.

⁶⁶ My translation of “*d’une théorie de la conscience...à une théorie de la communication linguistique*” (ibid., p.33, italics in original).

⁶⁷ “The real, then”, Peirce writes, “is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a community, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge” [Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Vols. 1-6 (edited by C.Hartshorne and P.Weiss) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935, Vol.5), quoted in Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p.15]. For an analysis of Peirce’s logic of inquiry see Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (translated from the German by Jeremy J. Shapiro) (London: Heinmann, 1972): pp.91-139.

⁶⁸ Habermas, *Sociologie & Théorie du Langage*, p.42.

Contrary to Sher, and following Habermas's conception of intentional states, I claim that there cannot be an intuitively given object or "adjustment in the world"⁶⁹ able to satisfy intentional value-claims in an evident, intuitive manner. Only argumentative and discursive agreement, intended in the pragmatist sense of the result of a cumulative process of inquiry, can provide the criterion for establishing which human goals are fundamental and, consequently, which activities are inherently valuable because they are "implicated" in the pursuit and successful realization of those goals. In this sense, discourse substitutes the empirical grounds through which Sher attempts to individuate those near-universal and near-unavoidable human goals which he then considers the original, meta-ethical touchstones for the evaluation of every human activity and trait.

Rather than looking at the empirical fact that most people pursue this or that goal, Habermas's theory of discourse helps therefore in reintroducing an "objective" notion of value grounded in the idea of communicative rationality⁷⁰ and in the related concepts of "ideal assertability" and "ideal speech situation".⁷¹ Only those human goals which participants in an unlimited communication community would agree upon on the grounds of rational argumentation are fundamental. In synthesis, then, while Sher individuates fundamental human goals in an empirical way (i.e. as those goals that most people unavoidably pursue), I conceive them as the objects of an ideal discursive agreement. Consequently, I also consider the activities pursuing those goals as (derivatively) potential objects of an ideal discursive agreement, as they are internally linked to those goals susceptible of discursive agreement.

⁶⁹ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.233. Sher also defines it as "a kind of further state whose instances *would* be especially appropriate to it [i.e. to the intentional value-claim] if any of them *were* to exist" (ibid., p.232, italics in original).

⁷⁰ This refers, in Habermas's words, to the "unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld" (Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol.1, p.10).

⁷¹ See ibid., pp.24-26. Habermas argues that argumentation involves "the intention of convincing a *universal audience* and gaining general assent for an utterance;...the intention of ending a dispute about hypothetical validity claims with a *rationally motivated agreement*; and...the intention of grounding or *redeeming* a validity claim with arguments" (ibid., p.26, italics in original).

Overcoming the Distinction between Moral and Ethical Discourses

Having illustrated how Sher's perfectionist theory can be enhanced through Habermas's theory of discourse, I would now like to clarify in what sense Sher's theory can help us to overcome Habermas's distinction between moral and ethical discourses, and therefore provide a more inclusive model of democratic deliberation. First, Sher emphasizes that his perfectionist theory is an explicit attempt to replace Aristotelian essentialism with an empirical substitute which, while preserving the teleological dimension of Aristotelianism itself, is constrained to abandon its metaphysical presuppositions. This mirrors Habermas's view that, without the same metaphysical background on which Aristotle could rely, any attempt to provide a unique answer to the question of "what is the good life" is bound to fail. In modern societies, different, sometimes incompatible forms of life may generate deeply contrasting answers to this question. In the end, for Habermas, "all attempts at a historicist revival of Aristotelian ethics on a postmetaphysical footing are beset with insuperable difficulties".⁷²

Instead of acknowledging the "anachronistic" character of classical Aristotelianism in order to reject it, Sher replaces its objectivism by identifying the factual source of value with intentional value-claims. He then integrates this (partially) subjective dimension with the objective one provided by fundamental human goals which, I have argued, should be worked out through rational discourse. In this way, I think, Sher does in fact manage to reconcile the idea of a hierarchy of ethical values with a modern postmetaphysical setting (in the way that I have illustrated), therefore eluding Habermas's critique.

Second, as well as embracing the teleological character of Aristotelianism, Sher also attempts to delineate a perfectionist theory alternative to contemporary models of communitarian perfectionism. In this sense, he aims to envisage universal (or at least "near-universal") goals which, in his own words, are not "supplied by a pervasive culture".⁷³ This helps him to overcome Habermas's idea that, within a postmetaphysical milieu, ethical discourses can only be carried out within the

⁷² Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p.125.

⁷³ Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.238.

horizon of specific forms of life. While offering a postmetaphysical substitute of classical moral realism, Sher still aims to establish the universal (or at least near-universal) validity of fundamental human goals, not rooted in particular forms of life but intended rather as fixed aspects of human nature. This helps in bridging the divide between norms and values, and between moral and ethical discourses. Due to their universal character, I argue, the fundamental human goals illustrated by Sher can be objects of an (ideally) universal consensus achieved through the same rational discourse which, for Habermas, only applies to theoretical and moral questions.

Finally, the fundamental human goals envisaged by Sher do not really bear an ethical value. As Sher emphasizes, being both “near-universal” and “near-unavoidable”, such goals are not good or bad in themselves but rather fixed features of human nature and therefore they are the meta-ethical (not ethical) criteria for evaluating every other human goal. This contributes still further to the idea that discursive rationality can be applied to ascertaining these fundamental meta-ethical human goals. Habermas’s view that ethical discourses are always context-related and unable to claim universal validity becomes irrelevant at this meta-ethical level. By providing the grounds for delineating which human goals are fundamental, discourse indirectly offers also the foundations for establishing which human activities and traits are inherently valuable in relation to those goals. Meta-ethical discourses reduce the gap between moral and ethical spheres and reveal a model of deliberative and inclusive perfectionism appropriate to the postmetaphysical milieu and to the ethical pluralism of modern societies.

Political Perfectionism and Deliberation: Stemming from the Same Meta-Ethical Sources

This has important consequences for both political perfectionism and deliberative politics. Extending the dimension of discourse from the moral to the ethical sphere makes it easier to understand how deliberation may legitimize state promotion of perfectionist (i.e. ethical, religious, cultural etc.) values and on which grounds such values might be admitted into the deliberative arena. Indeed, if deliberation is limited to the moral issue of dealing with ethical diversity, it seems difficult to envisage its connection with political perfectionism. Certainly the kind of moral discourses

envisaged by Habermas provide a procedural model of deliberative democracy which overcomes the limits of a mere *modus vivendi*. Nonetheless, I believe, the importance of discourse within a meta-ethical dimension provides the justification and the rationale for extending discursive practice to ethical matters. As I have attempted to explain, it is the way in which we establish why (and not merely which) things are good itself that tells us why we should talk and deliberate about the good.

Political perfectionism, in this sense, can be legitimate if intended not as the mere implementation of substantive goods whose intrinsic value is taken for granted, as in the Aristotelian *polis* or in the republican model of deliberative politics. The lack of a common set of unproblematic ethical values which characterizes modern plural societies determines an inevitable connection between state perfectionism and deliberation. What the state can legitimately promote are not substantive (liberal, religious, communitarian etc.) values in themselves but rather those values which would emerge from deliberation. This is not because deliberation is good in itself but rather because, in a postmetaphysical setting, it provides the only way in which we can determine which human goals are fundamental and, consequently, which things are universally (and inherently) good. If we renounce the kind of teleological objective unifying source of value which Sher illustrates and refuses, we are then left with either embracing (like Sher does) a purely empirical method for determining what is universally valuable or instead adopting the pragmatist epistemology endorsed by Habermas, which I have attempted to apply to Sher's conception of intentional value-claims.

Admitting the possibility of ethical discourses (in the light of meta-ethical ones) claiming universal validity provides important grounds for enhancing the prospects of democratic deliberation. The non-universalizability of ethical claims emphasized by Habermas would in fact threaten the possibility of a true dialogue within pluralist polities. Posing "impartial" fundamental goals as the foundations for ethical claims would instead change the quality of ethical discourses. Deliberating about the good would mean at the same time (probably mostly) deliberating about what goals we believe are fundamental human goals. As these, according to Sher, are independent

from any value judgment, we would finally have a stable ground for establishing what is good, for different individuals and groups, in relation to those common goals.

One might ask, at this point, if establishing which human goals are fundamental is really less problematic than directly determining what is good (as theories of intrinsic value do). Sher avoids answering this question by simply identifying fundamental human goals with those which most people unavoidably pursue. However, as I have already illustrated, this empirical approach leads him to obvious difficulties. The pragmatist epistemology endorsed by Habermas allows instead the maintenance of the objective status of fundamental human goals intended as the regulative ideals of a cumulative process of deliberation not confined to the limits of specific communities. This does not imply that an actual consensus needs to be achieved but rather that we can in principle talk about ethical matters and that this talk can in principle be extended to a universal audience. Fundamental goals are fluid enough to allow a variety of inherently valuable goods which could (directly or indirectly) contribute to their realization. Although ethical disagreement would surely remain, referring to fundamental goals would constitute at least a common ground for conducting a dialogue about ethical matters.

A major problem which I have not addressed yet concerns the way in which deliberation about the good should be conducted. In other words, once it has been argued that political perfectionism must involve deliberation, this does not explain yet the character (e.g. democratic, undemocratic etc.) of such a deliberation. Habermas's conception of deliberative democracy, for example, implies that a system of rights (i.e. negative rights, rights of political participation and social-welfare rights) is needed not on the basis of some (liberal) substantive conception of the good but merely in order to guarantee effective communication and discursive opinion- and will-formation.⁷⁴ This involves a set of problems⁷⁵ (including the risk of a circular justification of such rights) which can be avoided by focusing more closely on the pragmatist dimension of Habermas's theory rather than on his conception of

⁷⁴ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, pp.133-5.

⁷⁵ For a critique of Habermas's definition of communication, see Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, pp.35-47.

communication. Indeed the *Christian Gauss Lectures* precede Habermas's full development of his theory of communicative action and only emphasize the pragmatist dimension of his conception of truth, especially evident in his analysis of intentional states. In this sense, the idea of discursive consensus, which Habermas introduces in his analysis of intentionality, does not presuppose yet a developed theory of language and communicative action.

Conclusion

My conclusion in this chapter, therefore, is that some kind of ethical deliberation (rather than the unproblematic and direct promotion of substantive goods) is both possible and necessary for the legitimacy of political perfectionism. Deliberation, intended primarily in the pragmatist sense of a cumulative process of inquiry aiming for an ideal consensus, enters the very meta-ethical foundations of perfectionism. In post-conventional modern societies, we should talk about the good in politics because only through discourse we can in principle establish what is good. This prevents, I believe, both the risk of a recursive infinity (as deliberation should not be affirmed because it is good but simply because it is necessary) and the need for metaphysical foundations, while at the same time providing sufficiently objective grounds for meta-ethical, ethical and political perfectionism.

In order to illustrate a possible normative foundation for a democratic kind of deliberative perfectionism, in the next chapter I will examine Misak's attempt to ground moral and ethical discourses in pragmatist epistemology. I believe that Misak, despite being quite critical towards Habermas, in fact spells out more explicitly certain features implicit in the pragmatist aspects of Habermas's approach, without entering the controversial sphere of communicative action. However, while substantially endorsing her conclusions, I will also argue that her attempt to provide the rationale for epistemological holism (i.e. the idea that there are no substantial qualitative differences between religious and nonreligious reasons in public deliberation) is not entirely successful and that the kinds of meta-ethical discourses that I have illustrated in this chapter offer better grounds for understanding and justifying the normative linkage between political perfectionism and deliberation.

Chapter 6 - Political Parties and Pragmatist Deliberation

Embracing Charles Sanders Peirce's¹ pragmatist theory, and in line with Jürgen Habermas's *Christian Gauss Lecture* that I examined in the previous chapter, Cheryl Misak underlines how "[w]e do not have access to anything raw, unconceptualized, or 'given' in experience".² According to her, even our perceptual experience does not offer to us a "cognition-independent world";³ instead, it always involves some judgements, it is categorically shaped. Misak also highlights how, following Peirce's fallibilist epistemology, every experience, including perception, can always in principle be revised in the light of new findings. According to Peirce, and to pragmatism more generally, true belief does not correspond to an infallible conviction or to a metaphysical entity placed in some noumenal realm. Instead, Misak emphasizes, "a true belief is such that, no matter how much further we were to investigate and debate, the belief would not be overturned by recalcitrant experience and argument".⁴

There is a tight connection, in pragmatism, between truth and inquiry. On the one hand, truth should not be located above or beyond inquiry; on the other hand, it should not even be identified with the "end" of inquiry. According to Peirce, indeed, inquiry is in principle endless, we can never say when arguments have run out. Although we can never in principle reach the end of inquiry, we can at least establish, from the nature itself of the process, that a true belief would be one which no further experience or argument would defeat or invalidate, a belief which would "survive the trials of inquiry".⁵ According to Misak, the role of truth is thus "to set a direction and provide a focus of criticism for actual arrangements".⁶ On the one hand, then, pragmatism intends truth as a "regulative ideal of inquiry"⁷ rather than a

¹ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers* (edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; Vols. 7-8 edited by A.W. Burks) (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958-1966).

² Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.78.

³ Ibid., p.79.

⁴ Ibid., p.49.

⁵ Ibid., p.56.

⁶ Ibid., p.99.

⁷ Ibid., p.99.

“thing-in-itself” which we may be able to unveil and grasp directly through an intuitive or cognitive process. In this way, it does not forsake completely the idea of objective criteria of truth and it prevents moral scepticism.⁸ On the other hand, by acknowledging the importance of experience and inquiry, it prevents dogmatism, that is, the idea that one’s belief is the only right one, independently from what other people may think.⁹

Misak draws two important conclusions from her endorsement of pragmatist epistemology. First, she notes, since truth is always related to inquiry and experience, and since a belief could be true only in relation to (and in spite of) all the potential experiences and arguments which could in principle be raised against it, then truth entails a “democratic” attitude. In fact, if a belief must be responsive to all experiences (and withstand them) in order to manifest its soundness and to be considered true, then an inquirer who refused to take account of certain experiences (or of the experiences of certain kinds of people) would in fact choose an inadequate method for attaining truth.¹⁰ For pragmatism, indeed, we always need to start from experience, and since experience always shows that one’s beliefs are continuously challenged (by other people’s beliefs, by natural facts etc.), it would be difficult to conceive a true belief if not as a belief able to somehow “resist” all these trials. Therefore, a believer must at least take into account the beliefs of others (especially when they challenge her convictions), even just to display and confirm the strength of her own belief. Since these challenging beliefs do exist, she cannot just ignore or dismiss them. In order to be considered a genuine believer, she must confront them in a democratic fashion.

This pragmatist justification of democratic deliberation differs from other models of deliberative democracy. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, for example, argue that commitment to deliberation and to taking into account others’ views relies on a

⁸ In this sense, Misak emphasizes how “the best kind of pragmatism replaces the old dichotomy between neutral standards and no-standards-at-all with a substantive, low profile, conception of truth and objectivity, a conception which nonetheless can guide us in inquiry” (ibid., p.14).

⁹ According to Misak, “once...illiberal opponents are brought into the epistemic fold, they can be criticized as failing to really hold beliefs - things which are responsive to reasons. For they refuse to take the reasons of all seriously” (ibid., p.105).

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.104-106.

prior endorsement of liberal values (such as accountability, publicity and reciprocity) which are “partly independent” from the process itself of deliberation.¹¹ This poses problems of normative justification that Misak attempts to avoid by grounding her conception of liberal democratic deliberation upon the practice itself of seeking and providing justification for one’s moral and political contentions, rather than on pre-existing (unwarranted) principles.¹² Yet I will show how Misak’s pragmatist model still relies on some kinds of unjustified substantive grounds (underlying, for example, her definitions of “belief” and “dogmatic opinion”),¹³ thus replicating the problems raised, for example, by Rawls’s idea of “reasonableness” and by Habermas’s restricted notion of communication.¹⁴ However, I will also argue that political parties help to integrate her account by providing the normative rationale for and the institutional embodiment of pragmatist deliberation.

For now, I would like to stress that Misak’s theory differs from Habermas’s version of deliberative democracy. First, for Habermas democratic deliberation is grounded in the nature itself of communication which demands that “participants coordinate their plans of action consensually, with the agreement being reached at any point

¹¹ Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), p.366, n.18. See also Robert Talisse, *Democracy After Liberalism: Pragmatism and Deliberative Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.105 and my analysis in chapter 5. For a proceduralist account of democratic deliberation see Joshua Cohen, “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy”, in A. Hamlin and P. Pettit (eds.), *The Good Polity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp.17-34. For critiques of proceduralism see David Estlund, “Making Truth Safe for Democracy”, in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John E. Roemer (eds.), *The Idea of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.72-100 and Thomas Christiano, “The Significance of Public Deliberation”, in Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, pp. 252-253.

¹² Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, p.105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.74. Misak argues that “what it is to be a belief, as opposed to some other mental state, such as entertaining an interesting but idle thought, a lie about what one believes, or a dogmatic opinion, is that there must be something that can speak for or against a belief and that belief must be responsive to what can speak for or against it...Believing is a practice which is, by its very nature, linked to reason-giving or justification-giving” (*ibid.*, p.74). According to Misak, if a belief must be responsive to all experiences (and withstand them) in order to manifest its soundness and to be considered true, then an inquirer which refused to take account of certain experiences (or of the experiences of certain kinds of people) would in fact choose an inadequate method for attaining truth. Believing therefore entails, for Misak, a democratic attitude to deliberation.

¹⁴ For Misak’s critique of Rawls’s theory, see *ibid.*, pp.18-29. For a detailed critique of Habermas, see *ibid.*, pp.35-47. Against Rawls, Misak explicitly states that he “does not provide us with an independent or neutral justification of the liberal or democratic virtues; he just assumes those virtues” (*ibid.*, p.25). For Habermas’s model of communication see *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society) (translated from the German by Thomas McCarthy) (London: Heinemann, 1984) and *Between Facts and Norms* (translated from the German by William Rehg) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996a).

being evaluated in terms of the intersubjective recognition of validity claims”.¹⁵ This implies that an antidemocratic attitude is intrinsically inconsistent with the nature itself of communication. However, according to Misak, “[i]t seems that people do communicate – do speak and utter statements to others – without presupposing the things that [for] Habermas...are undeniable”.¹⁶ By refusing the kinds of transcendental arguments adopted by Habermas, Misak manages therefore to avoid, it seems, the risk of a justificatory recursive infinity which characterizes Habermas’s account.

Second, Misak also argues that pragmatist epistemology helps to overcome the divide between “external” and “internal” experiences and that this may lead to a form of “epistemological holism”.¹⁷ According to Misak, once we embrace pragmatist epistemology, there is no longer a qualitative difference between, for example, scientific and moral experiences. As in scientific research, Misak highlights, in our moral life we find many experiences compelling and our own moral beliefs fallible. We are sensible to experience and sometimes we change our moral beliefs. “Moral inquiry – Misak states - is aimed at finding the right answer and at improving our beliefs through considering more evidence, argument and perspective”.¹⁸ In moral, ethical and political inquiry, this implies that we cannot arbitrarily exclude certain people from discussion. This would prevent our beliefs from being fully tested against any potential counterargument advanced, for example, by people of a different race, religion, party etc. Moreover, Misak argues that “[c]oming face to face with ‘the other’ might force us to modify our understanding of...them. A racist, for instance, might get to know a member of the despised group and see, at least, that his generalisation is wrong”.¹⁹

An important aspect of Misak’s account (although she is not always entirely clear

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “Discourse Ethics: Notes on Program of Philosophical Justification Discourse Ethics”, in Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p.58.

¹⁶ Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, p.41. Misak also argues that “[w]hile it might be plausible that communication is at the centre of the notions of truth, objectivity and personhood, it seems simply wrong to define communication in the restrictive way in which Habermas does” (ibid., p.42).

¹⁷ See ibid., pp.84-90.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.86.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.92.

about this point) is that epistemological holism does not distinguish between moral and ethical discourses. As in the case of moral issues (i.e. questions of justice), Misak argues that also deliberation about conceptions of the good can be conducted by following the pragmatist model of inquiry.²⁰ Contrary to Habermas, Misak believes that conceptions of the good are not irremediably linked to their specific cultural and historical contexts and that “countless predicates cross political and racial boundaries”.²¹ I will illustrate in the next section why this conclusion is too hurried and how it could be prevented in the light of my previous analysis.

Methodological Foundations of Democracy and Inclusive Perfectionism

The epistemological holism envisaged by Misak is not necessary for establishing standards for ethical and moral judgements. We should not attempt to compare directly truth and value, theoretical and ethical inquiry. In trying to do this, Misak encounters several problems. Although Misak criticizes Habermas’s distinction between moral and ethical spheres, she then seems to employ the two terms interchangeably. This leads her to some inconsistencies. Misak rightly remarks, for example, that we are often compelled or conditioned by the experiences of others and that this proves that we must take them seriously if we want to achieve true moral judgments. I believe that this is true in the case of moral inquiry, and I consider Misak’s argument for a pragmatist epistemological foundation of democracy and basic rights a strong one. However, I also feel that Misak dismisses too quickly Habermas’s distinction. Ethical judgements, that is, judgments concerning conceptions of the good, do bear a certain connection with specific forms of life. Talking about the good, in this sense, quite often poses significant obstacles to cross-cultural communication and inquiry. Therefore, rather than endorsing a radical epistemological holism of the kind depicted by Misak, it is more feasible to conceive a universal inquiry concerning the meta-ethical foundations of ethical values and, derivatively, conceptions of the good intended in their inherent value. As I argued in the previous chapter, Sher’s theory of inherent value provides the normative framework for addressing ethical judgments indirectly, via an inquiry which focuses on searching for those human goals that are fundamental. In this sense, it helps in

²⁰ Ibid., p.80.

²¹ Ibid., p.82.

reinterpreting ethical inquiry in the terms of an (almost) theoretical inquiry.

In spite of this difficulty, I believe that Misak's account provides two important normative arguments which, if sufficiently developed, may help to enhance my analysis of Sher and Habermas. First, it supplies compelling normative grounds for establishing a liberal democratic polity without relying on substantive (and therefore controversial) grounds. Misak's purely methodological approach implies that "[t]he pragmatist's route to the preservation of autonomy, equal moral worth, and respect for persons is that preserving these things is a vital part of deliberation aimed at the truth".²² Grounded, as I have already shown, in the pragmatist account of belief and inquiry, this model seems to avoid many of the difficulties involved, for instance, in Rawls's political liberalism and its hidden substantive (liberal) assumptions, or by Habermas's attempt to ground the principles of liberal democracy in the nature of communication. This provides a promising normative path for constructing the idea of a "common language" regarding the constitutional and institutional framework within which political parties operate, a framework that, as I argued in the second chapter, Rawls's political liberalism is not able to provide.

The second normative aspect which emerges from Misak's account concerns instead the perfectionist character of a polity grounded in a pragmatist conception of ethical inquiry and deliberation. Addressing the issue of state neutrality and non-interference, Misak emphasizes how "often an appeal to reasons which refer to one's conception of what is valuable can and should be made in public deliberation".²³ The need to allow comprehensive views into the public sphere is driven, according to Misak, by the pragmatist requirement to test beliefs (including those about politics and ethics) against all possible perspectives and therefore against the particular

²² Ibid., p.115. According to Misak, "if we are to take seriously the experiences of all, we must let ways of life flourish so that they can be articulated and we must let people articulate them for themselves" (ibid., p.114).

²³ Ibid., p.109. The epistemological requirements of pragmatism also entail, according to Misak, the need to break the divide between private and public spheres. The need to "get a more complete take on matters" (ibid., p.109) implies that "[n]o aspects of life or of our practice should be in principle excluded from public debate or required to remain hidden and private" (ibid., p.119). Misak's overall conclusion, then, is that "[t]he pragmatist voices the requirement that we try, at least until such attempts fail, to include rather than exclude others. This entails listening carefully to the marginalized in society" (ibid., p.127).

points of view of different individuals or groups.²⁴ The normative framework provided by Misak's theory, then, seems to complement my previous analysis of Sher and Habermas, and to provide the rationale for an inclusive deliberative perfectionism which well suits the normative criteria of party politics. Thanks to the methodological foundations of the basic rights and the constitutional essentials, the pragmatist account of deliberative democracy makes the public sphere permeable to a plurality of conceptions of the good, while avoiding a retreat to a regime of prophylactic neutrality.

Deliberative Democracy and Political Parties

Political parties are usually neglected by deliberative democrats. They are often seen as aggregative agents of discrete interests and policy preferences, preventing the exchange of arguments and reasons²⁵ as well as the pursuit of the common good,²⁶ both central aspects of democratic deliberation. Yet, as Rosenblum highlights, "[r]emoved from party rivalry, the locus of deliberation in contemporary theory is ambiguous; the often invoked 'public sphere' is everywhere and nowhere".²⁷ Direct democracy experiments, such as Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin's "Deliberation Day",²⁸ present many of the flaws usually attributed to party politics, without offering at the same time the institutional and normative constraints that party politics provides.²⁹

Another common critique raised against political parties is that they are single-minded, unable to deal with a complex variety of issues and interests raised by

²⁴ For Misak, however, the epistemological argument only provides a normative background on which we may rely if standard moral arguments do not persuade our interlocutor of the evil of her action (ibid., p.124).

²⁵ James Johnson, "Political Parties and Deliberative Democracy?", in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: SAGE, 2006), p.48; Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.147 and David M. Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp.202-203.

²⁶ Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many* (New York: Westview, 1996), p.276.

²⁷ Nancy Rosenblum, "Glorious Traditions of Anti-Partyism and Moments of Appreciations", Lecture 1, "On the Side of the Angels", The Storr Lectures at Yale Law School, Spring (2006) [online]. Available at: http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~nrosenbl/Storrs_Lecture1.pdf [accessed 4 June 2008], p.42.

²⁸ Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin, "Deliberation Day", in James S. Fishkin and Peter Laslett (eds.), *Debating Deliberative Democracy* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 7-30.

²⁹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.204.

various groups within society.³⁰ Yet, as my analysis in the first chapter explained, parties are not mere associations (or interest groups), they “must consider the balance of relations among interests”³¹ as well as “refashion and generalize groups’ highly particular claims”.³² Parties which comply with the normative criteria of regulated rivalry and loyal opposition might provide a formal locus for public political deliberation and overcome “the appalling ‘hypertrophy of pressure politics,’ the ‘undemocratic and dangerous’ government by interest group.”³³ Both deliberation and majoritarian politics are therefore necessary in modern polities.³⁴ Parties “provoke one another to take up opposing positions and offer reasons”.³⁵ Most importantly, they “articulate positions, and their antagonism is the engine of ‘trial by discussion’”.³⁶ Unlike single-issue organizations or interest groups, parties rearrange a mass of disorganized and discrete opinions and interests, they select and re-shape them in a way more suitable for deliberation.³⁷

It is important to stress, however, that some deliberative theorists do recognize the importance of both deliberation and electoral politics, the role of parties as vehicles of (rather than obstacles to) deliberation³⁸ and the fact that institutional arrangements affect voters’ choices.³⁹ Furthermore, some argue, parties prevent material inequalities from determining a lower status for certain individuals or groups within the deliberative arena,⁴⁰ thus helping to guarantee the “fair value of political

³⁰ Ibid., p.206.

³¹ E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Reinehart and Winston, 1942), p.98. On the need for more formal institutions besides secondary associations, see James Johnson, “Arguing for Deliberation: Some Skeptical Considerations”, in Jon Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy*, (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.175. Johnson also recognizes the need for both deliberative and non-deliberative processes. Quite surprisingly, though, he does not explicitly mention political parties

³² Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.266.

³³ Ibid., p.272.

³⁴ Ibid., p.299. On this point, see also Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, pp. 57-58.

³⁵ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.306.

³⁶ Ibid., p.307. See also Jürgen Habermas, “Popular Sovereignty as Procedure”, in James Bohman and William Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass. And London: The MIT Press, 1997), p.48 and p.60.

³⁷ See Cohen, “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy”, p.31 and Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), pp.222-4 and pp.244-8.

³⁸ James Johnson, “Political Parties and Deliberative Democracy?”, p.50.

³⁹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.294.

⁴⁰ Cohen, “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy”, p.31.

liberties”.⁴¹ This is especially evident when parties are publicly funded and are therefore more immune to the political and economic pressures exerted upon them by lobbies and interest groups.⁴²

As well as regarding the relationship between political parties and democratic deliberation, scholars of party politics also display contrasting opinions regarding the relationship between intra- and inter-party democracy. Some argue, for example, that internal democracy helps party members’ participation and control over elected party officials,⁴³ as well as a further deliberative link between public political realm and civil society.⁴⁴ Others, in contrast, argue that limited internal democracy is necessary for both parties’ electoral success⁴⁵ and their external unity.⁴⁶ Similarly, I believe that the presence of a clear party ideology ought to have priority over intra-party democracy and deliberation. Indeed if we granted internal democracy precedence over party ideology (leaving therefore their programmatic characterization too open), parties would lose their unique bilingual nature and, crucially, their connecting role between civil society and public political realm. They would no longer coagulate diverse interests into comprehensive and credible manifestoes and programmes and they would therefore lose their function of linkages between social and political domains.

Yet one should not dismiss too quickly the importance of intra-party democracy and deliberation. First, although the sphere of inter-party democratic deliberation is where political parties primarily display the distinctive traits and advantages of

⁴¹ Ibid., p.18.

⁴² Ibid., p.18. See also Adam Przeworski, “Deliberation and Ideological Domination”, in Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy*, p.148.

⁴³ Richard S. Katz, “Party in Democratic Theory”, in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, pp.35-36.

⁴⁴ Knut Heidar, “Party Membership and Participation”, in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, p.311. For this aspect, see also Jan Teorell, “A Deliberative Defence of Intra-Party Democracy”, *Party Politics*, Vol.5, No.3 (1999), pp.363-82.

⁴⁵ Eric M. Uslaner, “Political Parties and Social Capital, Political Parties or Social Capital”, in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, p.383 and Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp.269-270.

⁴⁶ For this point see Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957), p.25 and E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942), p.60. For a critique of this argument, see Ian Budge, *The New Challenge of Direct Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p.129.

partisan identity (e.g. moderation, acceptance of pluralism etc.), intra-party deliberation might contribute to enhancing a deliberative habit and attitude in party members, thus rendering them more suited to engaging in inter-party deliberation and behaving like true partisans. Second, and most importantly, intra-party deliberation may help to prevent an excessive polarization of partisan advocacy and party pluralism. The dominance of polarized views, which might result from the lack of internal debate, would certainly contribute to increasing the rigidity and polarization of inter-party politics. This would lead to a distorted party system, not reflecting the true positions of party members (as it would exclude those of the internally excluded members) and inevitably reinforcing an authoritarian way of managing political parties, by reducing the accountability of party leaders.⁴⁷ Above all, a polarized party system would risk undermining the parties' consensus on a common institutional framework, thus causing parties to infringe the normative criteria of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry, as they would no longer be parts-of-the whole but parts against the whole.

Pragmatist Deliberation and Political Parties

I believe that deliberative democrats, even when they do not disregard parties, pay little attention to the specific way parties may influence, condition and shape the process itself of deliberation. Parties do not just provide new deliberative arenas, (alternative or additional to those provided by non-partisan associations within civil society) or prevent the economic disadvantage of some citizens from becoming a political disadvantage, limiting their opportunities of political participation. They do not merely select a range of political issues and a deliberative agenda. Parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter reshape comprehensive conceptions of the good and present them as comprehensive-views-among-many-views, comprehensive-views-committed-to-testing-and-trial and comprehensive-views-respecting-the-common-political-framework. Rather than being distinct arenas within which deliberation can be carried out, such parties can therefore be the semi-institutional tools through which values and policy proposals are reshaped and conveyed into a broader deliberative

⁴⁷ See, for example, Richard S. Katz, "Party in Democratic Theory", in Katz and Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, pp.35-36.

ground, be it the parliament or, during campaigns, a more informal public sphere (e.g. TV, newspapers, public debates etc.).

Most importantly, the rationale for deliberation, conducted through parties, stems from the normative criteria of party politics. Parties ought to acknowledge pluralism, display loyal opposition and pursue power only through legal means. They therefore ought to submit their views and policy proposals to the trial of electoral politics and the challenges and scrutiny of other parties and of the public opinion. These challenges also become manifest in parliamentary debates and during electoral campaigns. Parties also ought to accept the reversibility of consensus and the provisional nature of political power. Parties ought not to pursue their goals in a way which ignores the challenges and the alternative views put forward by other parties. There is therefore a clear link between the normative dimension of party politics and the pragmatist model of deliberation illustrated by Misak.

Indeed, in ideal terms, “partisans do not look to liquidate, erase or permanently disorganize the opposition...[P]artisans do not see minority status as irreversible...Partisans in the majority, too, recognize that their standing is partial and temporary...[P]artisanship entails commitment to the provisional nature of political authority”.⁴⁸ These features correspond to the central aspects of a pragmatist model of deliberation. The provisional value of political power, the importance attributed to inquiry and testing and the acknowledgement of the partiality of one’s political perspective are all expressions of both pragmatist deliberation and of the normative criteria of party politics. Therefore the pragmatist model seems to be particularly suitable for making sense of party politics.

Furthermore, the link between pragmatist deliberation and political parties also helps to resolve a normative problem which characterizes Misak’s account. Indeed, even though her pragmatist model contains important improvements on alternative models of deliberation and on Rawls’s political liberalism, it still appears to rely on some kinds of unjustified substantive grounds. Misak’s definition of “belief”, contrasted

⁴⁸ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.363.

with “dogmatic opinion”,⁴⁹ seems to replicate the problematic presence of underlying unwarranted assumptions analogous to Rawls’s idea of “reasonableness” and to Habermas’s restricted notion of communication, both criticized by Misak.⁵⁰

However, I believe that this vicious circle of justification is only problematic if we focus on individual citizens. In this respect, we may have to acknowledge that the pragmatist model of deliberation is powerless for dealing, for example, with a neo-Nazi citizen. The attempt to persuade her of the legitimacy of democratic principles by simply claiming that she is not behaving as a true believer seems to entail a circular argument. We would then need to explain, in fact, why a true believer is the one depicted by Misak and not a person holding dogmatic views. Furthermore, we should in the first instance find a legitimate argument for persuading the neo-Nazi citizen to engage in democratic deliberation and accept challenges to her views. Party politics, instead, already presents clear normative criteria. Parties ought to face the challenges to their views which emerge in electoral contests, campaigns, parliamentary debates etc., and which ought to be conducted within the constraints of the political framework within which they operate. Parties which contravene these criteria ought to be excluded from democratic politics. As well as providing the institutional embodiment of the model of pragmatist deliberation that I have endorsed in this chapter, parties thus also contribute to enhancing its normative soundness making it useful for concrete purposes.

Finally, focusing on political parties helps to enhance the rationale for the liberal democratic character of pragmatist deliberation emphasized by Misak, when she argues that “[t]he pragmatist’s route to the preservation of autonomy, equal moral worth, and respect for persons is that preserving these things is a vital part of deliberation aimed at the truth”.⁵¹ Political parties, we have seen, ought to comply with the normative criterion of loyal opposition. Within liberal democratic polities, this entails that they ought to respect the principles of autonomy, equal moral worth

⁴⁹ See n.13 in this chapter.

⁵⁰ See n.14 in this chapter.

⁵¹ Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, p.115. According to Misak, “if we are to take seriously the experiences of all, we must let ways of life flourish so that they can be articulated and we must let people articulate them for themselves” (ibid., p.114).

and respect for persons. Therefore, even though it might be questioned whether deliberation aimed at the truth (conducted outside the realm of party politics) does in itself involve such principles, it can certainly be asserted that, when such a deliberation is conducted through political parties within liberal democratic polities, it ought to abide by these principles.

Given this background, and the distinctive relationship between parties and deliberation, I believe that the pragmatist model of deliberative democracy that I have outlined in the present chapter provides a sounder common normative framework which may allow the flourishing and the open interaction of a plurality of political parties. Among the contributions provided by Misak's theory (reinterpreted in the way that I illustrated) for a normative account of political parties, I would like to highlight its inclusive character, as well as the absence of a neat distinction between public and non-public spheres and between moral and ethical domains. I also endorse Misak's attempt to renounce any reference to substantive values in order to justify the legitimacy of her democratic model. Although there are still some substantive premises at the basis of her normative framework, e.g. in her conception of "true belief", I have shown how these can be integrated by the normative criteria of party politics.

Conclusion

The analysis of pragmatist deliberation that I have conducted in this chapter concludes the second part of my thesis, in which I have developed a normative framework for understanding the legitimate limits of party politics and the significance of political parties in the context of deliberative democracy. In the third part I will narrow the object of my analysis and focus on religious political parties, as these provide a paradigmatic example of the potential moderating implications of party politics. In the next chapter I will thus examine recent debates in contemporary political theory concerning the idea of public reason and the role of religious arguments in the public political forum. While endorsing the idea of a more inclusive public sphere than the one advocated by political liberals, I will argue that religious political parties provide a valuable and often neglected institutional and normative

guarantee for an open but critically checked public deliberation, by conforming to the normative criteria of party politics that I outlined in the first chapter.

Part III

Religious Political Parties

Chapter 7 - Secularism, Public Reason and Religious Political Parties

The concept of secularism and the relationship between political and religious realms have been extensively analysed in a variety of academic disciplines and from a number of different methodological perspectives. Particularly important, in this sense, is the sociological literature on secularism, whose central strand, since the early days of the social sciences, has been the so-called “theory of secularization”. The core meaning of the theory is the idea of “societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres – primarily the state, the economy, and science – from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere”.¹ This process, the theory suggests, has resulted in the gradual decline and privatization of religion.² Systematized by Emile Durkheim and Max Weber,³ the theory was substantially revised during the 1960s, when several sociologists began to highlight more the process of differentiation between religious and secular spheres, rather than an actual decline of religion in the Western modern world.⁴ After the subsequent re-emergence of religion in the public sphere, during the 1980s the link between differentiation and privatization also began to falter. Indeed, as well as arguing against the identification of differentiation and privatization, Casanova also highlights the “deprivatization of modern religion”⁵ and the positive role that religion itself may have within modern societies, by inducing public reflection about society’s normative structure, questioning the functionalist logic underlying modern states and markets and providing an alternative to the dominant paradigm of liberal

¹ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.19.

² Ibid., p.20. For a systematic critique of the three theses, see ibid., pp.25-39.

³ Ibid., p.17. See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain) (New York: Free Press, 1965) and Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation”, in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp.129-156.

⁴ See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1967); David Martin, *The Religious and the Secular* (London : Routledge & K. Paul, 1969) and Thomas Luckmann, *Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p.211.

individualism.⁶ Also Peter L. Berger,⁷ like Casanova, has recently highlighted the flawed assumptions and conclusions of the theory of secularization, highlighting the resurgence of religious movements (especially orthodox ones),⁸ even in Western Europe, and thus substantially rebuffing his own earlier work.⁹

Political Parties and the Institutional Dimension of Secularism

Despite the interesting implications that it may have for a sociological analysis of the relationship between religion and politics, the secularization theory is not particularly relevant for the normative scope of my inquiry. Indeed, as Veit Bader rightly emphasizes, “[f]rom the perspective of liberal democratic politics and normative theory, the important question is not whether society and state are fully secularized or secular...What matters is whether [a state] is decent and liberal democratic...[and]...communications, arguments and opinions...[are]...conducive to an agonistic democratic dialogue”.¹⁰ As the subject of my study is religious partisan politics, and as my perspective is that of a normative political theorist, I will disregard purely sociological accounts of secularism and focus instead on two specific strands of the literature on secularism, namely the philosophical and institutional strands.

More precisely, in the present chapter I will examine recent debates in normative political theory concerning the relationship between politics and religion, and the constraints that should be imposed upon the use of religious arguments in the public realm. In my analysis, I will partly refer back to the critique of Rawls’s conception of public reason that I conducted in the second chapter. While endorsing the position of those theorists who invoke a more inclusive public sphere than that advocated by political liberals, though one still characterized by a set of deliberative constraints, I

⁶ Ibid., pp.228-229.

⁷ Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview”, in Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), pp.1-18.

⁸ Ibid., p.6.

⁹ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*. For a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the theory of secularization, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.49.

will argue that religious political parties can be especially valuable in providing the institutional and normative guarantee for an open but critically checked public deliberation, by complying with the normative criteria of party politics that I outlined in the first chapter.

In the eighth and ninth chapters, instead, I will move on to an analysis of the institutional dimension of secularism, examining various ideal models of church-state relations and analysing their implications for religious political parties. Focusing on the institutional dimension is necessary for two main reasons, one exogenous and the other endogenous to the scope of my inquiry. The former, highlighted by Bader, is that “[o]ur interpretations and applications of moral principles and rights such as religious freedom(s) are massively influenced by respective predominant institutional regimes of religious governance in different countries”.¹¹ The close relationship and interaction between normative and empirical dimensions render therefore necessary “a contextualized theory of morality, combined with an institutional turn in political philosophy and theory”.¹² While endorsing this methodological shift, though, I also believe that the “institutional turn” in political theory must be accompanied by a parallel “normative turn” in the study of institutions and regimes of church-state relations. In other words, the need for a novel, hybrid perspective must help not only to contextualize normative findings but also to enlighten our understanding of existing institutional arrangements on the basis of ideal frameworks. Only if interpreted in this sense can the “institutional turn”, that I will discuss, be useful for both normative and empirical inquiry.

The second reason for examining the institutional dimension of church-state relations is more directly grounded in the specific nature of religious parties and of parties in general. Due to their bilingual nature, and to their intermediate position between civil society and the political realm, parties are always affected by the institutional framework within which they operate. Different regimes of religious governance institutionalize different (combinations of) normative values, including freedom of

¹¹ Ibid., p.92.

¹² Ibid., p.92.

religious association and religious expression, right to religious education, equality between religious faiths etc. It is therefore crucial, in the case of religious parties, to look at the different levels of institutionalization of religious values which characterize various models of church-state relations as this conditions, in ideal terms, the extent to which religious parties may channel religious values and demands into the public political forum.

Also in this case, however, it will be necessary to look at the relationship between ideal regimes of religious governance and ideal religious political parties, in order to unveil the normative implications of this analysis. Indeed, while endorsing, in the eighth chapter, a specific model of religious non-establishment as (ideally) the most suitable for the (ideal) presence and functioning of religious political parties, I will also highlight its flaws and suggest an alternative model which relies, normatively and institutionally, on religious political parties. Only by prioritizing the ideal/normative dimension can this critical account be feasible and help to provide an improved normative framework for making sense of religious partisan advocacy.

Exclusivist Accounts of Public Reason

In the second chapter, I addressed the problems involved in John Rawls's analysis of public reason in relation to the bilingual agency of political parties. It emerged that the constraints of public reason invoked by Rawls would seriously jeopardize partisan advocacy for three main reasons. First, Rawls does not preclude the application of the limits of public reason to matters of ordinary politics, once such limits have been successfully applied to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. Second, Rawls clearly states that political parties and their members (both in power and during electoral campaigns) are fully subject to the constraints of public reason when deliberating about matters involving constitutional essentials. Third, Rawls does not set a clear borderline between constitutional and non-constitutional matters, and between public and non-public realms. This makes it difficult to discern when and where the limits of public reason should apply and it implicitly signals that constitutional essentials are often involved, directly or indirectly, when matters of

ordinary politics are discussed in the public political forum or within civil society.¹³

As I extensively illustrated in the second chapter, Rawls envisages the possibility of an overlapping consensus of comprehensive conceptions of the good around a political conception of justice. The rationale for Rawls's conclusion is what Cristina Lafont defines "overdetermination thesis",¹⁴ i.e. the idea that "we are able to arrive at the *same* results by *different* epistemic paths".¹⁵ Rawls's strategy responds to the need to provide a neutral justification for political authority, given the fact of reasonable pluralism which characterizes liberal democratic societies. As I highlighted in the second chapter, and as Lafont also notes, in *Political Liberalism* Rawls emphasizes that, in order to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of political decisions, not only public officials (e.g. members of the constitutional court, of the parliament etc.) but also ordinary citizens ought to abide by the constraints of public reason, and therefore only appeal to political reasons, when voting in elections on matters concerning constitutional essentials and basic justice.¹⁶

In truth, in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" Rawls seems to relax this requirement when he argues that the constraints of public reason should only apply to debates about fundamental issues in "the public political forum".¹⁷ The latter, he argues, comprises judges, government officials and candidates for public office but not ordinary citizens, when they deliberate (even about fundamental matters) in the informal public sphere of civil society, what Rawls defines the "background culture".¹⁸ Yet, even in this later statement, Rawls still endorses a "criterion of reciprocity",¹⁹ namely the view that "ideally citizens are to think of themselves as if they were legislators and ask themselves what statutes...they would think it most reasonable to enact".²⁰ This seems to confirm that Rawls still supports an expansive

¹³ See my analysis in chapter 2.

¹⁴ Cristina Lafont, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Remarks on Habermas's Conception of Public Deliberation in Postsecular Societies", *Constellations*, Vol. 14, No.2 (2007), p.240.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.240 (italics in original).

¹⁶ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a), p.215.

¹⁷ John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" in *Political Liberalism*, p.443.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.444.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.445.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.444-445.

conception of public reason and, therefore, a narrow scope for public deliberation, both in the public political forum and within civil society.

Even more radically than Rawls, Robert Audi²¹ endorses an exclusivist conception of public deliberation and openly characterizes public reasons as secular, i.e. those reasons whose normative justification does not rely upon the existence of God. Only these reasons, he argues, may provide the rationale for the state promotion of “laws or policies that restrict the scope, or even the de facto exercise, of liberty”.²² Besides this “principle of secular rationale” Audi also illustrates the “principle of secular advocacy”,²³ which demands the exclusion of religious considerations from public debate unless absolutely necessary for elucidating one’s motives, and the “principle of secular resolution”,²⁴ which establishes that “while any kind of factor may enter into the discussion...a final decision to adopt a policy should be fully warranted by secular considerations and promulgated in that light”.²⁵ Furthermore, in order to prevent an exterior commitment to secular reasons from concealing the de facto endorsement of religious values, Audi endorses “a principle of partial secular motivation”,²⁶ establishing that “[m]y conduct toward others can...be mainly coloured by my religious preferences, so long as I find a secular rationale strong enough in my own thinking so that I would not press my religious views without it”.²⁷

One common critique raised against exclusivist accounts such as Rawls’s and Audi’s is that they impose undue cognitive burdens upon religious citizens, for whom religion represents a totalizing force, encompassing all aspects of their lives. As Nicholas Wolterstorff highlights, “it belongs to the *religious convictions* of a good many religious people in our society that *they ought to base* their decisions

²¹ Robert Audi, “The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol.18, No.3, Summer (1989), pp.259-296.

²² Ibid., p.279. For this point, see also Robert Audi, “The Place of Religious Argument in a Free and Democratic Society”, *San Diego Law Review*, Vol.30, No.4 (1993) p.701.

²³ Audi, “The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship”, p.280.

²⁴ Ibid., p.280.

²⁵ Ibid., p.280.

²⁶ Ibid., p.286.

²⁷ Ibid., p.286.

concerning fundamental issues of justice *on* their religious convictions”.²⁸ Moreover, quite often non-religious reasons may simply not be available to religious citizens. The latter may therefore not be able to endorse a political decision on grounds different from those which derive from their religious comprehensive doctrines.²⁹ This is also one of the main problems that I highlighted in my critique of Rawls in the second chapter.

The account recently provided by Jürgen Habermas³⁰ seems in principle less vulnerable than Rawls’s (and Audi’s) to the so-called “split-identity objection”,³¹ i.e. the critique that, within secular regimes, religious citizens are forced to relinquish their religious views (and therefore separate their public identities from their non-public ones) when engaging in public deliberation. Habermas clearly distinguishes formal from informal public spheres and invokes an “institutional translation proviso” implying that “only secular reasons count beyond the institutional threshold that divides the informal public sphere from parliaments, courts, ministries and administrations”.³² As the translation proviso is only required for public officials, ordinary citizens may appeal to their religious comprehensive doctrines without having to provide parallel public reasons. Yet this framework, Lafont notes, presents the same problems which emerge from Rawls’s account as political reasons, enabling an institutional translation, may not be available for religious citizens when they enter the formal public sphere. Although Habermas’s distinction between the two domains is clearer than Rawls’s, and although he imposes conversational constraints only upon the formal public sphere, such constraints seem to be as strict as the Rawlsian ones.³³

²⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues”, in Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), p.105 (italics in original).

²⁹ Lafont, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Remarks on Habermas’s Conception of Public Deliberation in Postsecular Societies”, p.244.

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.14, No. 1 (2006), pp.1-25.

³¹ Melissa Yates, “Rawls and Habermas on Religion in the Public Sphere”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol.33, No.7 (2007), p.883.

³² Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, pp.9-10.

³³ Lafont, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Remarks on Habermas’s Conception of Public Deliberation in Postsecular Societies”, p.245.

In truth, Habermas also advocates a “self-reflective transcending of a secularist self-understanding of Modernity”.³⁴ In a post-secular society, characterized by the established presence of religious communities, secular citizens must take religion seriously and restrain from denying the possible truth of religious claims. They must adopt “an epistemic mindset...that would originate from a self-critical assessment of the limits of secular reason”.³⁵ As Melissa Yates highlights, this requirement, that Habermas imposes upon non-believers, does restore “a symmetrical account of civic obligations”³⁶ which assigns a duty of “cognitive openness” to both religious and non-religious citizens. Yet, like Lafont, she highlights that “the split between one’s identity as a co-legislator and one’s identity as a religious person persists at a different theoretical level, but maintains a significant resemblance to the distinction upheld in Rawls’s theory between citizens’ public and non-public selves”.³⁷

Beyond the Public-Private Divide: Inclusive Accounts of the Public Political Realm

What emerges from the analysis conducted in the previous section has important implications for religious political parties. Exclusivist conceptions of public reason, such as those provided by Rawls, Audi and Habermas, present common features in their accounts of the relationship between religious and political reasons. They all establish an institutional borderline beyond which only political reasons may be admitted into public deliberation. Despite the different characterizations of this borderline, the three conceptions agree in compelling religious citizens to split their identities when switching from the informal to the formal public sphere. As the only standard idiom admitted in the latter realm is a secular or political one, these accounts impose an unfair burden upon religious citizens, forcing them to both divorce themselves from their most profound beliefs and struggle to reformulate their religious reasons in public political terms.

This problem, which I had already envisaged in the second chapter when I assessed the compatibility between party politics and Rawls’s political liberalism, seems to be

³⁴ Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, p.15.

³⁵ Ibid., p.15.

³⁶ Yates, “Rawls and Habermas on Religion in the Public Sphere”, p.887.

³⁷ Ibid., p.885.

particularly relevant for religious political parties. Many religious comprehensive doctrines (i.e. those which, in Rawls's terms, lack an "account of free faith") are likely to be excluded by Rawls from the public political realm. This likely exclusion is also clear in Habermas's and Audi's accounts. The split-identity issue which characterizes these approaches prevents therefore the cognitive and political continuity, between civil society and public political realm, which religious political parties require in order to preserve their role of bilingual semi-institutional channels of religious comprehensive views.

Yet there are alternative models of public deliberation which reject the Rawlsian-Habermasian exclusivist approach and share instead the endorsement of an inclusive public political realm, open to the contributions of religious citizens. The main condition that these accounts impose upon religious citizens, on entering the public political realm, is that they ought to be willing to face the challenges and critiques arising during the process of public deliberation. This argument presupposes the epistemological assumption that religious reasons are not essentially obscure but accessible to non-believers, and that therefore they may be critically evaluated and, if necessary, rejected by the latter, without having to be "translated" into political or secular reasons. While endorsing the basic assumptions of these inclusive models, I will also highlight the potential flaws which characterize them. I will then explain how religious political parties, by complying with the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter, may be invaluable institutional tools for ensuring the feasibility of this inclusive public deliberation while guaranteeing that religious citizens maintain a self-critical attitude, open to argumentative challenges. Outside party politics, such commitments, although not unfeasible, might be more difficult to achieve.

The first aspect usually highlighted by defenders of an inclusive public political realm is that, in order to take religious or non-religious reasons seriously in public deliberation, it should be sufficient "*to evaluate them strictly on their merits*" and thus to be prepared to offer the counter arguments and counter evidence needed to show

why they may be wrong, in case one thinks they are”.³⁸ According to Lafont, though, the right to include in public debate one’s sincere reasons (e.g. religious ones) should be distinguished from “*a right to be released from the obligation to engage the views and reasons of others* in order to justify to them the coercive policies one favours”.³⁹ In other words, the right to appeal to religious reasons does not involve the right to a “‘mono-glot’ political advocacy”⁴⁰ or to the protection of one’s cognitive integrity as this would be incompatible with a genuine process of democratic deliberation, testing both religious and non-religious views on the basis of arguments and counterarguments.

Similarly to Lafont, Maeve Cooke highlights how Habermas’s institutional translation proviso is too restrictive and undermines “the transformative power of deliberation”⁴¹ that Habermas himself has helped to delineate through his discourse ethics and the non-authoritarian account of truth and knowledge which characterizes his theory of communicative rationality.⁴² If the arguments put forward by citizens who endorse different comprehensive views must be accessible to every citizen from the beginning, she argues, then there is no actual need for deliberation. Cooke invokes instead an open-ended deliberation in which “general agreement is construed as a regulative idea that guides our practices while always transcending our powers to achieve it”,⁴³ so that political legitimacy does not depend on the actual attainment of such an agreement but rather on the process itself which tends towards it. This view, she argues, finds institutional expression in the provisional character of majoritarian politics and it corresponds to the model that Habermas himself provides in *Between Facts and Norms*.⁴⁴

³⁸ Lafont, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Remarks on Habermas’s Conception of Public Deliberation in Postsecular Societies”, p.249 (italics in original).

³⁹ Ibid., p.252 (italics in original).

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.253.

⁴¹ Maeve Cooke, “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion”, *Constellations*, Vol.14, No.2 (2007), p.228.

⁴² Maeve Cooke, “Salvaging and Secularizing the Semantic Contents of Religion: the Limitations of Habermas’s Postmetaphysical Proposal”, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol.60 (2006), p.199.

⁴³ Cooke, “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion”, p.229.

⁴⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (translated from the German by William Rehg) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996a).

According to Cooke, then, Habermas simply fails to apply his own theory to the analysis of religious beliefs and “to distinguish between religious beliefs that are epistemologically authoritarian and those that are not”.⁴⁵ Only the former, Cooke argues, must be excluded from democratic deliberation and decision-making as they consider knowledge of the final truth not as a regulative ideal but rather as an achieved goal, thus undermining the whole process of critical questioning and argumentation which should characterize public deliberation.⁴⁶ According to Cooke, therefore, metaphysical understanding of truth (such as the one displayed by religious faiths) needs not be epistemologically authoritarian. As long as it is accompanied by the idea that only fallible knowledge of truth is possible, it is entirely compatible with democratic deliberative processes. Furthermore, Cooke argues, having acquired their beliefs through revelation does not prevent religious citizens from being able to provide reasons to sustain their views in public deliberation.⁴⁷ Similarly to Cooke, Christopher Eberle⁴⁸ highlights how religious citizens need not deny the existence of infallible religious texts (e.g. the Bible, the Koran etc.) but only that of infallible interpretations of those texts, in order to participate in public discourse. Eberle therefore invokes “inclusion coupled with criticism”,⁴⁹ i.e. a model of public deliberation which admits both religious and secular reasons as long as they accept being exposed to critical assessment.

Religious Political Parties and Inclusive Deliberation

Religious political parties can be especially useful, in ideal terms, for providing the semi-institutional guarantee for the self-critical, non-authoritarian kind of political advocacy invoked by defenders of an inclusive public political forum (such as Lafont, Cooke and Eberle) as an alternative to the Rawlsian/Habermasian exclusivist model. Indeed it is unclear, at first glance, why religious citizens should be committed to the non-authoritarian and self-critical kind of political advocacy which, according to these authors, should accompany a more inclusive public political realm

⁴⁵ Cooke, “Salvaging and Secularizing the Semantic Contents of Religion: the Limitations of Habermas’s Postmetaphysical Proposal”, p.199.

⁴⁶ Cooke, “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society?”, p.235.

⁴⁷ Cooke, “Salvaging and Secularizing the Semantic Contents of Religion”, p.200.

⁴⁸ Christopher J. Eberle, “Religion, Pacifism and the Doctrine of Restraint”, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.34, No.2 (2006), pp.203-224.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.222.

and replace Rawls's and Habermas's secular constraints. From a normative perspective, it is unclear why religious (or non-religious) citizens ought to engage the views and reasons of other citizens, display a non-authoritarian understanding of truth and embrace a self-critical attitude, alimented by "the transformative power of deliberation",⁵⁰ if not on the basis of the normative criteria of party politics. From an institutional perspective, it is uncertain how an inclusive and critical public deliberation could be guaranteed and sustained, if not through religious parties.

Religious political parties operating within liberal democracies ought to commit to the non-authoritarian promotion of comprehensive conceptions of the good, and to the provisional character of majoritarian politics. They thus can be the institutional embodiments of Cooke's idea that the metaphysical understanding of truth needs not entail epistemological authoritarianism. By complying with the normative criteria of party politics that I outlined in the first chapter, religious parties can convey the former while refusing the latter. Parties ought not to forsake their metaphysical conceptions of truth but only accept "that they are parts and will always be seen as partial...All that is necessary is acknowledging that organized political disagreement is ineliminable and party conflict its form".⁵¹

I also explained, in the first and third chapter, how political parties ought to respect party pluralism. While conveying metaphysical understandings of truth, they ought to acknowledge that they express politically partial demands and forsake any ambition to permanently impose them upon the whole society, ignoring other parties. Furthermore, religious parties ought to reject any authoritarian stance and be open to the challenges and criticisms they face in public deliberation. The transformative power of party politics, more than "the transformative power of deliberation",⁵² can therefore be especially valuable for guaranteeing the presence of an inclusive public political forum, where metaphysical understandings of truth are welcomed as long as they are accompanied by a self-critical attitude and openness toward a plurality of reasons and beliefs.

⁵⁰ Maeve Cooke, "A Secular State for a Postsecular Society?", p.228.

⁵¹ Nancy L. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp.142-143.

⁵² Maeve Cooke, "A Secular State for a Postsecular Society?", p.228.

The second argument usually put forward by defenders of an inclusive public deliberation is that citizens need not share “some major premise and some mode of reasoning”⁵³ or rely on a pre-existing consensus grounded on ideas implicit in the political culture of Western societies (as claimed, for example, by Rawls), but only adopt an open and imaginative mind and the readiness to be exposed to unfamiliar and challenging perspectives. According to Jeremy Waldron, for example, admitting religious views into political life does not necessarily lead to “a babel of mutually unintelligible and incommensurable metaphysics”.⁵⁴ Referring to the Aristotelian idea of deliberation, in which contributions in public debate must be “*apt to be received* by other members of the community”,⁵⁵ Waldron defends “the idea of shared modes of reasoning, a common matrix of public understanding on which various views of various people can be laid out, compared, contrasted and synthesized”.⁵⁶ Public consensus as a pre-condition for deliberation should therefore be replaced, according to Waldron, by the Wittgensteinian idea of “family resemblances”.⁵⁷ This implies that, rather than a fixed set of publicly endorsed propositions, “several sets of views may exist, each of which has a claim to be regarded as ‘the public consensus’, if anything is to be so regarded”.⁵⁸

The need for an “imaginative approach” to public deliberation is also highlighted by Bhikhu Parekh, one of the main advocates of an inclusive public sphere in which religious people may convey their religious values and reasons without having to translate them into secular arguments. According to Parekh, the only requirement is that “if religious persons wish to persuade others, they must speak in a manner to which the latter can imaginatively relate and respond”.⁵⁹ This does not imply, for

⁵³ Jeremy Waldron, “Religious Contributions in Public Deliberation”, *San Diego Law Review*, Vol.30, No.4 (1993), p.838.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.835.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.836 (italics in original).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.836.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.839.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.839. This conclusion seems to echo Tariq Modood’s view that “different kinds of groups...might choose to organize in different ways and to relate differently to key civic and political institutions...[on the basis of]...some degree of ‘variable geometry’” [Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.83].

⁵⁹ Bhikhu Parekh, “The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse”, in Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Religion, Politics and Peace* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p.77.

Parekh, that religious people must adopt neutral (rational and secular) arguments.⁶⁰ According to him, religious language does not create particular difficulties in political life, especially in contemporary Western societies where political debate is already “multilingual” and has been able so far to accommodate the instances of communists, conservatives, liberals etc.⁶¹ Furthermore, Parekh argues, religions have often contributed to the development of emancipatory movements and, even when they endorse controversial policy decisions (e.g. forbidding abortion), they stimulate public debate within society concerning values and moral practices.⁶²

Similarly, Michael J. Perry⁶³ argues that religious beliefs are not in principle more controversial than nonreligious ones. Both kinds are susceptible to participation in public deliberation and reason-giving processes. Above all, Perry argues, religious beliefs are not necessarily more sectarian, monologic, rigid and destabilizing than secular ones and, crucially, they “do not have a different, much less inferior, epistemological status from that of other beliefs, a status that makes them less appropriate than other beliefs as a basis for a political choice”.⁶⁴ Perry endorses therefore a form of “epistemological holism”, refusing any qualitative epistemological distinction between religious and nonreligious beliefs and arguments in public debate. Yet admitting religious beliefs into public deliberation means recognizing that their epistemological status is not inferior to that of nonreligious views, but it does not imply that they will always prevail over opposing (religious or nonreligious) views. A political choice, grounded in religious reasons, might be rejected if “the reasons opposing the choice (*which may even be religious reasons*) are stronger than the reasons supporting it”.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ For the idea of a neutral epistemological standpoint see, for example, Larry Alexander, “Liberalism, Religion, and the Unity of Epistemology”, *San Diego Law Review*, Vol.30, No.4 (1993), p.797. See also Stephen L. Carter, “Evolutionism, Creationism, and Treating Religion as a Hobby”, *Duke Law Journal*, Vol.1987, No.6, December (1987), pp.992-993.

⁶¹ Parekh, “The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse”, p.74.

⁶² Ibid., pp.70-71. In order to guarantee the institutional integration of religious groups, Parekh suggests the creation of “a national interreligious forum” (ibid., p.78). See also Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006a), p.331.

⁶³ Michael J. Perry, “Religious Morality and Political Choice: Further Thoughts - And Second Thoughts - on *Love and Power*”, *San Diego Law Review*, Vol.30 (1993), pp.703-727.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.715.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.719 (*italics in original*).

Although I endorse epistemological holism and agree that religious reasons need not in principle be incomprehensible to non-believers, I also believe that certain arguments, deeply grounded in religious texts or traditions, may not immediately be intelligible to non-religious citizens when put forward in the public political forum. Religious political parties can provide, in this sense, a second important contribution to an inclusive public deliberation. Thanks to their bilingual nature, they can contribute in rendering such arguments more accessible to the general public, by linking them to specific and concrete policy matters all citizens are likely to be familiar with (e.g. abortion, public funding of religious schools etc.). Through their manifestoes and party programmes, religious parties can therefore establish a formal interrelation between the comprehensive religious doctrines by which they are inspired, and the variety of policy issues that they need to address during electoral campaigns or when they are in power. In this way, non-religious citizens can acquire a better grasp of the meanings of certain religious beliefs, and of their implications for political matters which affect the whole society, thus becoming more equipped to critically evaluate and sometimes reject those views. In this way, religious political parties can also render religious views more vulnerable to public scrutiny, and therefore more suitable for public deliberation.

Why Is Pluralistic Deliberation Through Religious Parties Valuable?

Political parties ought to comply with the normative criteria of regulated rivalry and loyal opposition. They ought to ensure that the politicization of comprehensive views and public deliberation, involving both religious and non-religious citizens in the public political forum, are conducted within the limits and in the respect of a common constitutional and institutional framework. By complying with these criteria, both religious and non-religious parties can therefore prevent the escalation of political and religious division and enhance instead the idea of pluralistic unanimity. They can share the same common political framework and see themselves as parts-of-a-whole. Thanks to the normative criteria of party politics, and to its intermediate location between civil society and public political domain, religious parties can therefore be especially valuable tools for conveying the transformative power of deliberation and guaranteeing an inclusive public debate open to both

religious and non-religious claims. Pluralistic deliberation conducted through religious political parties is, in ideal terms, a vital mechanism for channelling and moderating religious claims in a way that enhances democracy. As I explained in the previous chapter, the normative criteria of party politics reflect the central features of the pragmatist model of democratic deliberation that I endorsed.

The channeling of religious demands via political parties, consistently with the normative criteria of party politics, can therefore allow religious individuals and groups not to be excluded from the public life of their political community and to have their voices heard at the political and institutional levels. The exclusion of religious groups from party politics might result either from their choice not to participate or from the state's decision to exclude religious values and religious advocacy from the political and institutional spheres. In the former case, religious groups which refuse to participate in democratic party politics should be aware that this might lead to their isolation and marginalization from the political community. The choice not to develop a religious political identity in order to participate in democratic politics, and to remain instead anchored to one's holistic religious worldview may involve "high costs in a religiously pluralistic and democratic society. Self-distancing removes the religious community, its institutions and ideas, from participation in the larger spiritual and intellectual life of the nation and, through that, of one's own time".⁶⁶ The latter case refers instead to those secularist or even political liberal arguments (some of which I have examined in the present chapter) which invoke the relegation of religious beliefs to the private sphere.

The exclusion of conservative religious groups and parties from democratic politics is likely not to enhance their eagerness to compromise and negotiate on political matters. Instead, they are "more likely to become passionate (and perhaps paranoid) about their beliefs than included groups".⁶⁷ Their views will not be exposed to public scrutiny and challenges, being more likely to be reinforced by a limited and self-referential deliberation conducted among the narrow limits of their religious

⁶⁶ Eldon Eisenach, *The Next Religious Establishment: National Identity and Political Theology in Post-Protestant America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p.41.

⁶⁷ Jeff Spinner-Halev (2000) *Surviving Diversity. Religion and Democratic Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p.151.

communities, where such views are already broadly endorsed. Rather than enhancing a sense of common belonging to the political community and a feeling of shared citizenship, this process might therefore intensify divisions and render them more disruptive of democratic politics.⁶⁸ Banning religious parties from democratic politics, therefore, “is liable to close off the central political method of accommodating ethnic and religious pluralism, and can amount to the political exclusion of a whole sector of society”.⁶⁹

Especially in those societies characterized by religious pluralism, it is therefore important to provide religious communities with effective channels for conveying their values and their policy proposals into the political arena. If such groups want to base public policies on their religious beliefs, it is important to let their views be challenged and questioned in the public political sphere. By including such views into political deliberation at the national level, “liberals [and, I would argue, any other group or individual opposing them] can challenge them to provide evidence for their beliefs”.⁷⁰ This also helps to defy the common liberal view that religious reasons are especially idiosyncratic and therefore not accessible to public deliberation involving non-religious citizens. Rather than by being shared by all citizens, reasons are public when “they are open to inspection and can be intelligently discussed by anyone with the requisite knowledge or willingness to acquire it”.⁷¹

Pluralistic deliberation through religious political parties can therefore have a transformative effect. Religious citizens who have decided to create a party ought to abide by the legal constraints of party politics (e.g. participating in elections and pre-electoral debates, fostering policy proposals through representatives in the parliament etc.). In this way, parties can put into practice the deliberative potential often attributed to representative democracy and they “can serve as deliberative agents in democratic politics, and...be organized to enable deliberation”.⁷² By complying with

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, p.151.

⁶⁹ Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.418.

⁷⁰ Spinner-Halev (2000) *Surviving Diversity*, p.152.

⁷¹ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p.327.

⁷² Nancy Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal

the normative criteria of party politics, parties can “preserve a high level of commitment to political action, yet be forced in some measure to speak the language of general welfare”.⁷³ They can also reshape religious claims “in a way that is conducive to democratic participation”.⁷⁴ Religious political identity, which they introduce in political life, is qualitatively different from the religious (pre-political) identity of churches, religious sects or other non-partisan organizations.⁷⁵ Party politics, therefore, can make religious views more suitable to public deliberation, e.g. by rendering them open to challenges, to confrontation with alternative views and to the provisional nature of political authority. Religious parties can also contribute in rendering the inclusion and participation of religious groups into the public political realm more systematic, therefore preventing them from maintaining a degree of exclusion which a merely occasional involvement might imply, thus offsetting the beneficial effects of participation in democratic politics.

Furthermore, the inclusion of religious political parties into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities is also important because such parties represent the views and interests of (religious) sections of society, therefore performing an important democratic task. Banning them from democratic politics, therefore, “is liable to close off the central political method of accommodating ethnic and religious pluralism, and can amount to the political exclusion of a whole sector of society”.⁷⁶ Without such parties, many religious citizens would lack the institutional channels for conveying their views into the public political realm. The democratic support that religious parties enjoy, especially when it provides them with political power (e.g. seats in the parliament) also enhances their legitimacy. Therefore if excluding religious parties a priori from political life might reduce the space for democratic expression and prevent the moderation of religious claims which can result from their deliberative function, excluding them once they have acquired the legitimacy which comes from people’s democratic support may represent an even greater

Democratic Thought”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.49.

⁷³ R.L. Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.82.

⁷⁴ Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, p.38.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, p.45.

⁷⁶ Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p.418.

infringement of democratic politics.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated the relationship between religious political parties and inclusive models of democratic deliberation. While endorsing the idea of an inclusive public political realm, I have also highlighted how religious political parties may be especially useful for obviating some of the normative difficulties raised by inclusive models of deliberation. By complying with the normative criteria of party politics, religious parties can contribute in guaranteeing the presence of an inclusive public political forum, accompanied by a self-critical attitude and openness toward the reason and beliefs of other citizens (and parties). They can also help in establishing a formal interrelation between the comprehensive religious doctrines by which they are inspired, and the variety of policy issues which they need to address in their manifestoes and electoral programmes, thus rendering religious arguments more accessible to nonreligious citizens and open to public scrutiny. Finally, religious parties can contribute to a political deliberation conducted within the limits and in the respect of a common constitutional and institutional framework, thus preventing the factionalization and fragmentation of the political and institutional landscape. These arguments, I believe, enhance the case for allowing religious values and religious partisan mobilization into the public political realm.

In the next chapter I will examine some ideal institutional models of church-state relations and assess their implications for a normative theory of religious political parties. In the ninth chapter, I will then endorse Veit Bader's⁷⁷ model of associative democracy (AD) and non-constitutional pluralism (NOCOP) but argue that Bader neglects the role religious political parties can play in providing religious views with qualitatively novel features which make them suitable for the kind of deliberation he advocates. I will therefore conclude that Bader's model is normatively justified and institutionally feasible only if religious political parties are placed at its core.

⁷⁷ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*; Veit Bader, "Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2003b), pp.55-91.

Chapter 8 - Institutional Models of Church-State Relations

As I explained at the beginning of chapter 7, the influence of institutional arrangements of religious governance upon the ways normative principles (e.g. religious freedom, religious equality) are understood and implemented, raises the need for an “institutional turn in political philosophy and theory”.¹ Yet I also argued that the “institutional turn” in political theory must be accompanied by a parallel “normative turn” in the study of institutions and regimes of church-state relations. In other words, the need for a novel, hybrid perspective must help not only to contextualize normative findings but also to enlighten our understanding of existing institutional arrangements on the basis of normative ideal frameworks. Only if interpreted in this sense can the “institutional turn” be useful for both normative and empirical inquiry.

Furthermore, I argued, due to their bilingual nature, and to their intermediate position between civil society and the political realm, (religious) political parties are always affected by the institutional framework within which they operate. Different regimes of religious governance institutionalize different (combinations of) normative values, including freedom of religious association and religious expression, right to religious education, equality between religious faiths etc. It is therefore crucial, when examining religious parties from a normative perspective, to look at the level of institutionalization of religious values which characterizes different models of church-state relations as this will inevitably condition the extent to which religious parties may be allowed to channel religious values and demands into the public political realm. I will treat these various kinds of regimes of religious governance as “ideal types”² and analyse their implications for ideal religious political parties. I will conclude, in the ninth chapter, that religious political parties are best incorporated

¹ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.92.

² According to Max Weber, an ideal type is “a unified *analytical* construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. Historical research faces the task of determining in each individual case, the extent to which the ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality” [Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (translated from the German by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch) (New York: Free Press, 1949), p.90 (*italics in original*)].

into the public political realm by a regime of religious non-establishment which guarantees the political institutionalization of a plurality of religious demands.

Three Models of Church-State Relations

Tariq Modood and Riva Kastoryano³ individuate three major institutional models of church-state relations which have been adopted, with some variations, by Western countries. Due to their mainly sociological approach, they analyse these models in their concrete dimension, referring to some specific polities in which they have been implemented in an almost paradigmatic way. I will instead look at these models in their ideal significance. My critique, although directed at Modood and Kastoryano's analysis, will therefore address the ideal versions of the models that they illustrate. Only by looking at the relationship between ideal regimes of religious governance and ideal religious political parties, may it be possible to unveil the normative implications of this analysis.

The first model illustrated by Modood and Kastoryano is the English one which, they argue, involves a clear distinction between the established Anglican Church, institutionally connected to the state, and a deeply secular society. According to Modood and Kastoryano, the historical and theoretical roots of the English model must be found in the British Enlightenment, namely in the way of intending religion as a medium for the acquisition of morality.⁴ Furthermore, according to them, the historically limited power of the Anglican Church has contributed to the absence, in England, of a significant opposition to the established Church and of an anti-clerical movement.⁵

The second model illustrated by Modood and Kastoryano is the American one. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (US), stating that

³ Tariq Modood and Riva Kastoryano, "Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe", in Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou and Richard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.162-178.

⁴ For a contemporary defence of the importance of religion and of "its tendency to promote the habits and dispositions that make good citizens" see Michael J. Sandel, "Religious Liberty: Freedom of Choice or Freedom of Conscience", in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.87.

⁵ Modood and Kastoryano, "Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe", p.163.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”,⁶ establishes a radical separation between church and state. This, according to Modood and Kastoryano, aims to guarantee and promote religious diversity, which is considered as a valuable good in itself. Furthermore, contrary to the English model, the American one displays a regime of state secularism coexisting with a very religious society, therefore revealing (as in England) the absence of a causal relationship between societal and political secularization.⁷

The third model is the French one. Like the American one, Modood and Kastoryano note, the French model hinders the presence of an established church. However, contrary to both the American and the English varieties of secularism, it assigns to the state the duty to encourage the privatization of religion within civil society. Furthermore, while attributing to the republican institutions an almost religious connotation, the French state has retained a certain degree of control upon the various religious faiths and their representatives, and the latter have become almost like civil servants.⁸ The main consequence of this process, they argue, is that “[t]he state confers institutional legal status on the Catholic clergy, the Protestants of the National Federation of the Protestant Churches of France, and to the Jews governed by the Consistory created under Napoleon”.⁹ The French state seems thus able to control religious expression, foster anti-clericalism in civil society and prevent religious beliefs from entering the public political realm.

The American Model

If intended in ideal terms, the American model implies a neat separation between church and state, aiming above all to further the value of religious pluralism. In truth, American secularism has been interpreted in two different ways throughout history, as either accommodationism or separationism. The former allows a close relationship between state and religion (e.g. official references to religion, public funding of

⁶ “First Amendment to the United States Constitution”, quoted in Martha C. Nussbaum, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defence of America’s Tradition of Religious Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p.109.

⁷ Modood and Kastoryano, “Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe”, p.164.

⁸ Ibid., p.165.

⁹ Ibid., p.165.

religious school etc.) whereas the latter invokes a “wall of separation” between the two domains.¹⁰ Although separationists prevailed over accommodationists during the 1960s, when they managed to disestablish monotheistic religion, accommodationists began to gradually regain influence under Ronald Reagan’s presidency during the 1980s.¹¹ Here, for the sake of my analysis, I will treat the American regime of religious governance as an expression of what Veit Bader defines Non-Establishment and Private Pluralism (NEPP), involving a strict separation between religious and political realms and allowing religious pluralism in civil society but not at the political and constitutional levels.¹²

One of the positive implications of this model for religious partisan identity is that it favours a bottom-up channelling of societal religious instances. By promoting the diversity of faiths, American secularism allows broad scope for organized religion in civil society.¹³ Religious groups seek therefore to employ their powerful voice in order to influence the political process, both at the level of ordinary and constitutional politics. This in principle allows space for the bilingual agency of religious political parties, intended as carriers of comprehensive conceptions of the good from civil society into the public political realm.

To the extent that the American model of secularism encourages political channelling from below, it thus meets one of the main requirements for the presence of religious political parties. Nonetheless, one crucial feature of the American model, if interpreted in its ideal meaning, renders it incapable of accommodating religious parties. This is the neat separation that it imposes between church and state, and between political and religious realms. The “wall of separation” embodied by the

¹⁰ Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.44-45. Some authors, such as Nussbaum, have emphasized how the Establishment clause of the First Amendment should not be identified with the idea of church-state separation tout court, but related instead to the idea of protecting the equality (e.g. political, educational, professional etc.) of individual citizens in the public realm (Nussbaum, *Liberty of Conscience*, p. 12, p.106 and p.229).

¹¹ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*, p.98.

¹² Veit Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2003b), p.70.

¹³ Indeed, as José Casanova highlights, “collective religious identities have been one of the primary ways of structuring internal societal pluralism in American history” [José Casanova, “Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism”, in Thomas Banchoff (ed.), *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.67].

First Amendment precludes the presence of religious parties, both in normative and institutional terms.

The bilingual nature of political parties, which is characterized by the promotion of particularistic and general principles, and by the translation of perfectionist (e.g. religious) claims into political ones, finds an insurmountable obstacle in the American model of secularism, ideally intended. In this model, the societal dynamism of religious organizations cannot in principle be translated into either (plural) religious establishment or religious partisan pluralism. Religious partisan identity is simply unattainable. Within this institutional framework, therefore, parties might not be able to balance “partisanship and impartial governing, loyalty to the party and loyalty to the state, party interest and general interest”.¹⁴ Instead, they might risk being reduced to behaving like factionalist movements, given the absence of an institutional point of connection between their pluralistic instances and the unity of the polity. Pluralistic unanimity and regulated rivalry are therefore unfeasible goals for religious parties operating within this model, and religious claims are condemned to remain merely partial and disintegrative.¹⁵ American secularism fails to provide the balance between a shared set of public values and citizens’ private allegiances which is necessary for the bilingualism of religious parties. In the absence of this balance, private religious instances might thus lead to social and political instability. The disintegrative tendency of the American model, intended in ideal terms, prevents the presence of religious political parties as these are not given the chance to link their particularistic claims with the common constitutional and institutional framework, in order to preserve their bilingualism.

The French Model

The French model presents paradoxical traits. As in the United States, in France there is no established church. Contrary to the American case, however, non-

¹⁴ Ibid., p.65. See also *ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁵ For a similar argument, in relation to the issue of public education, see Meira Levinson, “Liberalism versus Democracy? Schooling Private Citizens in the Public Square”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.27, No.3, July (1997), pp.344-349. See also Bhikhu Parekh, “The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse”, in Leroy S. Rouser (ed.), *Religion, Politics and Peace* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p.79 and Cécile Laborde, “From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.32, No.4 (2002), p.600.

establishment in France does not aim to promote religious pluralism and, most importantly, it is not accompanied by a neat separation between state and religious faiths. Grounded in the Jacobin tradition, French secularism is rather driven by the state's endeavour to impose a substantive, anti-clerical philosophy upon civil society, and it tries to achieve this through a top-down control of religious expression.¹⁶ It is easy to understand where the problem for religion partisan identity lays.

On the one hand, the absence of a “wall of separation”, such as the American one, certainly offers more normative and institutional room for partisan bilingualism. Indeed a Christian Democratic Party (the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* - MRP) did exist in France until the 1960s.¹⁷ More recently, the *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF), succeeded by the *Mouvement Démocrate* (MoDem) in 2007, has also been partly inspired by Christian Democracy. On the other hand, however, the top-down nature of the French model renders the politicization of religious views significantly restrained by state control. This prevents the possibility of translating religious views into religious partisan ones. As in Rawls's political liberalism, religious views are either excluded from the public political realm or only admitted in so far as they contribute to endorsing and legitimizing the existing constitutional framework, an unlikely prospect given the strong, secular and non-neutral character of French state secularism. I will show in the tenth chapter how an analogous problem characterizes Turkey, where the top-down laicism imposed by the Kemalist republican establishment has prevented for several decades the existence (or led to the banning) of religious political parties.

Contrary to the American model, then, the French one emphasizes the presence and preservation of a strong common framework. This institutional centralistic arrangement excludes religious instances from the public sphere while enacting a

¹⁶ For an account of the changes which have taken place in France since the 1970s, signalling a partial departure from the Jacobin tradition, see Sebastian Poulter, “Muslim Headscarves in School: Contrasting Legal Approaches in England and France”, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol.17, No.1 (1997), p.55.

¹⁷ For the influence of Christianity on political life in France after WWII, see Anton Rauscher, “The Influence of Christian Democracy on Socio-Cultural Policy in Western Europe”, in Emiel Lamberts (ed.), *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945-1995), Proceedings of the Leuven Colloquium, 15-18 November 1995* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), pp.440-441.

top-down control which aims to impose unity and repress plurality. Religious political parties are not in principle forbidden and there is no neat church-state separation able to preclude their existence. However, even if allowed, such parties would always be reduced to mere branches of the state. Their religious values would be constantly shaped by the state basic structure in order to transform them into sources of legitimization of the existing institutional and constitutional framework, as in Rawls's political liberalism.¹⁸

Interestingly, Cécile Laborde¹⁹ highlights how, unlike secularism (which involves the liberal aspiration to provide a balance between the preservation of individual freedoms, the presence within society of diverse conceptions of the good and the need for mutual norms of political membership reflecting the equal status of all citizens), French *laïcité* “endorses a more expansive conception of the public sphere than political liberalism, as well as a thicker construal of the ‘public selves’ which make up the citizens of the republic”.²⁰ Excluding or limiting the presence of religion in the public sphere is considered necessary, in this framework, for ensuring the equal treatment of all citizens. French *laïcité* was officially sanctioned by the Law of Separation promulgated in 1905, which aimed to guarantee religious freedom as well as the absence of state official recognition and financial support of any religious creed. The law obliged all religious groups to be officially registered by the state as *associations cultuelles* (religious associations) and established that all religious buildings built by 1905 would become public property.²¹

Laborde argues that French *laïcité* is grounded in the idea of an independent secular ethics which permeates a “thick” public sphere and aims “to make the ‘public’ identity of citizenship an expansively constructed identity and one that is more discrepant from the ‘private’ identity of citizens than political liberals, such as

¹⁸ See, for example, Stephen Macedo, “Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism”, *Political Theory*, Vol.26, No.1, February (1998), p.72.

¹⁹ Cécile Laborde, “Secular Philosophy and Muslim Headscarves in Schools”, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.13, No.3 (2005), pp.305-329.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.307.

²¹ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*, pp.150-151.

Rawls, would allow”.²² This contributes in fostering “a homogeneous public identity”²³ and it seems to defy the idea itself of separation between public and private realms. This strongly centralized, expansive public sphere represents the landmark of French *laïcité* and it points at an almost unidirectional, top-down process of political channelling. While advocating the neat separation between political and religious realms, Laborde highlights, the French state recognizes the representative role of “centralized religious authorities”.²⁴ By endorsing moderate and *laïque* leaders, as in the case of the recently constituted French Council of the Muslim Cult, the state “favours the ‘laicization’ of Muslim organizations along lines already followed by Catholics, Protestants and Jews”.²⁵ This reveals, for Laborde, the paradoxical character of French *laïcité*, combining a rhetoric of church-state separation with the state’s constant endeavour to influence and control, from above, centralized religious representative bodies.²⁶ Laborde’s analysis anticipates some of the issues that I will address in the tenth chapter, where I examine Turkey’s unorthodox model of secularism. Although I find her account quite compelling, I disagree with the distinction that she makes between French *laïcité* and Rawls’s political liberalism. As I explained in the second chapter, behind an apparently “thin” conception of the political sphere political liberalism conceals a “thick” and expansive understanding of public reason. This imposes serious limitations upon religious expression both in the public political realm and in the associational and private domains. Political liberalism is therefore much more similar to French *laïcité* than Laborde argues, as it conceives the relationship between political and societal realms in a top-down way, thus seriously jeopardizing the feasibility of religious

²² Laborde, “Secular Philosophy and Muslim Headscarves in Schools”, p.315.

²³ Ibid., p.315.

²⁴ Ibid., p.321.

²⁵ Ibid., p.321. See also Danièle Hervieu-Léger, “Islam and the Republic: The French Case”, in Thomas Banchoff (ed.), *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.208. For the tension between state neutrality, multiculturalism and universalism in France see also Cécile Laborde, “The Culture(s) of the Republic: Nationalism and Multiculturalism in French Republican Thought”, *Political Theory*, Vol.29, No.5, October (2001), pp.716-735. For a close analysis of French republican perfectionism in relation to the headscarf issue see Cécile Laborde, “Female Autonomy, Education and the *Hijab*”, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol.9, No.3, September (2006), pp.351-377.

²⁶ For a more detailed account of the ways the French state actively intervenes in the life of religious communities, as well as for a useful historical account of church-state relations in France since the 13th century, see John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 2007), pp.20-28.

partisan identity.

The English Model

The English model, as I have already explained earlier in this chapter, combines weak religious establishment with a deeply secularized society.²⁷ As in France, there is no neat separation, in England, between political and religious realms. Indeed, the publicly recognized role of religion seems to promise broader normative space for religious partisan identity. However, I believe that two main problems characterize this model.

First, the possibility of an institutionalized religious pluralism that the English model seems to allow, implying the (potential) public recognition of other faiths besides Anglicanism, may not necessarily facilitate religious partisan pluralism. As I explained in the first chapter, an institutional and constitutional framework must already be settled for party bilingualism to be feasible²⁸ and, therefore, for parties to comply with the normative criteria of party politics. Political parties require an impartial common institutional arrangement in order to be able to comply with the normative criteria of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry. This framework is not made more impartial by simply expanding it so as to include not one but several, or even all the religious faiths present within a specific society. My suggestion, in the sixth chapter, was indeed that a procedural framework, grounded in a pragmatist model of deliberation, would be more suitable for welcoming the perfectionist claims conveyed by religious and other political parties, while also establishing the legitimate limits of their expression. Both weak establishment and a potential plural establishment would not therefore modify, in my view, the biased character of the common framework which characterizes the English model. Institutional establishment, in other words, is not flexible enough for reflecting changing societal trends and integrating novel religious demands while providing a non-partial framework suitable for religious political parties. By incorporating religious values into the framework itself, this model offers a very rigid institutional arrangement and

²⁷ See John G. Francis, "The Evolving Regulatory Structure of European Church-State Relationships", *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.34 (1992), p.797.

²⁸ Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.16.

precludes the pluralistic unanimity religious parties ought to convey.

The second problem which characterizes the English model is related to the first one. Weak establishment, as we have seen, coexists in England with a deeply secularized society. This implies that there may not actually be many societal religious instances to be conveyed by hypothetical religious parties into the political arena. In other words, the comprehensive idiom of religious partisan identity is weak in the English model, and party bilingualism seems therefore jeopardized. One might argue that this is a mere sociological aspect which should not affect an evaluation of the English institutional model, intended in ideal terms, in relation to religious partisan identity. However, as I explained earlier, the presence of an established Church in England was historically facilitated by the distinctive way in which religion itself was conceived within society. The tradition of the British Enlightenment contributed in enhancing a process of societal secularization which rendered the presence of a (not very powerful) Church of England institutionally and normatively unproblematic. Therefore, the secular character of English society is tightly connected to the weak establishment model and it may represent a further factor against the feasibility of religious partisan identity within this framework. Conversely, the presence, in England, of recently arrived religious communities (e.g. the Muslims) which have not experienced the same process of secularization, poses a different set of problems that I am going to address in the next section.

Pluralistic Institutional Integration/Assimilation

Having delineated some of the weaknesses of the English model of secularism, I would now like to illustrate the alternative model proposed by Modood and Kastoryano.²⁹ According to them, secularism is usually endorsed on the basis of the idea that, by guaranteeing a neutral public sphere and not favouring any specific religious belief, it ensures religious freedom and equality within society. This argument, they claim, is essentially flawed as it overlooks the fact that “[p]olitics and law depend to some degree on shared ethical assumptions and inevitably reflect the

²⁹ Modood and Kastoryano, “Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe”.

norms and values of the society they are part of”.³⁰ Therefore, they endorse the idea that the arrival of new religious or ethnic groups, with their values and demands, may in fact contribute to expanding the existing constitutional frameworks of Western polities. This, they argue, implies a deep interaction between political and cultural realms, as religious communities may seek state support, for example for their schools or cultural institutions, while the state may rely on religious communities for fostering those virtues, such as truth-telling and altruism, which enhance and foster civic morality.³¹

Modood and Kastoryano highlight how the public culture of Western societies has been partly shaped by religious (mainly Christian) values, even though the religious import of such values may nowadays no longer be recognized.³² This implies that “those citizens whose moral, ethnic or religious communal identities are most adequately reflected in the political identity of the regime...will feel least the force of a rigidly enforced public/private distinction”.³³ Refusing to integrate the religious claims of Muslims or other non-Christian communities is therefore likely to reinforce the privileged status of Christian citizens and to jeopardize, rather than ensure, religious equality.³⁴ Modood and Kastoryano thus argue that “the appropriate response to the new Muslim challenges is pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation, rather than an appeal to a radical public/private separation in the name of secularism”.³⁵ This model, they highlight, aims to substitute strict separation with a more moderate and flexible secularism “based on institutional adjustments”.³⁶ Furthermore, it replaces difference-blind state neutrality with a more difference-sensitive approach and it encourages “a pragmatic, case-by-case, negotiated approach to dealing with controversy and conflict, not an ideological,

³⁰ Ibid., p.169.

³¹ Ibid., p.169.

³² Ibid., p.170.

³³ Ibid., p.170.

³⁴ For this point, see also Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp.132-134 and Bhikhu Parekh, “Europe, Liberalism and the ‘Muslim Question’”, in Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach*, p.189.

³⁵ Modood and Kastoryano, “Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe”, p.173.

³⁶ Ibid., p.173.

drawing a ‘line in the sand’ mentality”.³⁷ According to Modood in particular, this model is especially suitable to England where, as well as the established Church of England, various religious faiths (e.g. Catholicism, Judaism, Methodists etc.) already enjoy some forms of state recognition in various areas of public life (e.g. Parliament, schools, hospitals, prisons etc.).³⁸ Similarly to Modood and Kastoryano, Parekh highlights how the only way to institutionally acknowledge the centrality of Christian values in British society while guaranteeing, in the name of religious equality, the official recognition of religious minorities in the UK, would be “both to accept the privileged status of Christianity *and* to give public recognition to other religions”.³⁹

A Critical Assessment of Pluralistic Institutional Integration/Assimilation

I would like to highlight three reasons why pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation is unsuitable for guaranteeing true religious pluralism and, indirectly, religious partisan pluralism. First, like the English model of weak establishment, Modood and Kastoryano’s involves the incorporation of religious values into the institutional framework itself, therefore precluding the pluralistic unanimity of which religious parties ought to be expressions. If one or more religions (but not others) received institutional and constitutional recognition, the common framework required for (potential) religious partisan pluralism and pluralistic unanimity to be viable would inevitably be biased. Moreover, any attempt to provide all religious faiths with institutional recognition would encounter practical and normative difficulties, and it would risk rendering the institutional and legal arrangement of the polity unnecessarily complex and rigid.

Second, the fact that certain religious (Christian) values have shaped the national culture (and often the institutional arrangement) of Western polities does not imply that the religious values of newly arrived religious minorities should be

³⁷ Ibid., p.173.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.172-173.

³⁹ Bhikhu Parekh, “Religion and Public Life”, in Tariq Modood (ed.), *Church, State and Religious Minorities* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), p.20. See also Bhikhu Parekh, “The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy”, in David Held (ed.), *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993) p.170 (italics in original).

straightforwardly incorporated into the existing institutional and constitutional frameworks of these countries. On the one hand, values take a long time to settle within a culture. During this process they shape and are shaped by the majority culture. Therefore, it may not be feasible to simply incorporate newly arrived religious faiths into a framework which has been formed over centuries. On the other hand, by invoking the incorporation of religious values directly into the constitutional framework of a polity, this model lacks the institutional flexibility which is necessary for dealing with a continuously evolving religious landscape. The model of “pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation” seems therefore a shortcut for a process of integration which is much more complex and lengthy.⁴⁰ These problems emerge, for example, from the abovementioned way in which Parekh emphasizes the need to balance equal treatment of all religions and respect for the Christian identity of the British society. By acknowledging the privileged status of the Church of England, Parekh implicitly recognizes the weight of history and tradition. Although I appreciate the idea of pluralistic establishment, I find it difficult to understand how the privileged status of the Anglican Church would have to be interpreted in institutional terms.

If other religions were only granted a secondary institutional status (whatever this might be) this would certainly undermine equal treatment. Furthermore, this would represent the implicit acknowledgement that, as I have just argued, religious minorities may not deserve full institutional recognition as their values have not yet become part of the national public culture. In this sense, a secondary institutional status would have to be considered as a temporary arrangement, gradually evolving towards full establishment as religious minorities become more entangled with the national culture. If, on the other hand, religious minorities were granted the same institutional recognition enjoyed by the Anglican Church, then the primacy of England’s Christian identity would be jeopardized. If, finally, disestablishment was chosen instead, this would present again the initial problem of the cultural predominance of the Christian religion, one of the reasons why institutional

⁴⁰ For a similar critique, see also Silvio Ferrari, “The Legal Dimension”, in Brigitte Maréchal, Stefano Allievi, Felice Dassetto and Jørgen Nielsen B. Maréchal (eds.), *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), p.239.

pluralism had been conceived in the first instance. There seems to be no way out from this dilemma and this is due, as I explained, to the lengthy and complex process by which new religious demands are incorporated into an existing culture, a process that no institutional short-cut may elude.

The second reason why new religions cannot simply be incorporated into the institutional and constitutional framework of Western polities is that they are often intrinsically (and historically) different from Christianity. As I have illustrated above, Modood and Kastoryano, like Parekh, view the UK as the locus where institutional religious pluralism would be especially feasible, given the presence there of an institutional framework (weak establishment) which could be easily expanded in order to embrace other religious faiths. I also explained, however, the deep connection between the specific character of Christianity in Britain, and the fact that religious faiths have historically undergone a process of moderation and internal secularization, influenced above all by the legacy of the British Enlightenment. Most non-Western religions have not experienced an analogous evolution. By simply incorporating Islam or other non-Western religions into the existing institutional framework we would thus dangerously ignore the crucial differences arising from their diverse historical evolutions.

Conclusion

Given the difficulties highlighted in the present chapter, I find it necessary to search for an alternative model of church-state relations, able to provide both normative and institutional space for religious parties, and different from the ideal models which find concrete expression in the US, France and England, but also from the model of pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation proposed by Modood and Kastoryano (as well as by Parekh). In the next chapter, I will therefore focus on the model of associative democracy (AD) and non-constitutional pluralism (NOCOP) recently devised by Veit Bader.⁴¹ Bader's work is probably the most comprehensive and systematic account of secularism and church-state relations published to date. Furthermore, it manages to combine strong empirical and sociological analysis with

⁴¹ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*; "Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism".

a deep theoretical perspective, thus offering an unusually balanced interdisciplinary approach. His NOCOP model, as I will show, avoids the main normative difficulties that I have envisaged in the models of church-state relations examined in the present chapter. Unlike the English and the pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation models, NOCOP rejects the incorporation of religious values and principles into the constitutional framework. In contrast to the American model, it does not place a “wall of separation” between religious and political spheres, and it thus allows the spill-over of religious values, present within society, into the political realm. Finally, unlike the French model, it endorses a bottom-up channelling of religious demands, avoiding the strong top-down state control upon religious groups and organisations which characterizes France and, as I will illustrate in the tenth chapter, Turkey.

By avoiding all the difficulties arising from these models, then, NOCOP offers a novel and fresh theoretical platform for reconsidering the issue of church-state relations from a normative perspective. For this reason, I will engage in a detailed analysis of Bader’s account, in order to disclose the central features of his model and assess its soundness in the light of my account of religious political parties. Although NOCOP, I will argue, provides in principle a more inclusive and flexible framework, for the normative agency of religious political parties, than the models that I have illustrated in the present chapter, I will show how Bader does not grasp sufficiently the intrinsic features of religious partisan identity and therefore fails to provide convincing normative grounds for justifying the inclusive public deliberation that NOCOP involves. I will therefore conclude that religious political parties, intended as the institutional channels of the pragmatist model of deliberative perfectionism that I defended in the sixth chapter, can reshape religious values and make them suitable for the kind of deliberation advocated by Bader, thus providing NOCOP with sounder normative grounds and institutional feasibility.

Chapter 9 - Secularism, Religious Political Parties and Non-Constitutional Pluralism

Veit Bader¹ envisages five major models of religious establishment, characterized by different degrees of institutionalization of monism and pluralism. His account displays a much more theoretical approach than that of Modood and Kastoryano. The first model illustrated by Bader is represented by the “[s]trong establishment of a monopolistic church”² and can be found in countries such as Greece, Serbia or Israel. In this model, normative religious monism is accompanied by full church establishment and there is no space, it seems, for the pluralistic institutionalization of religious values. The normative foundations of this model correspond to those of the monistic perfectionism that I have already illustrated and rejected in the third chapter. The second model illustrated by Bader is weak establishment, which involves “constitutional or legal establishment of one State-Church which has to be compatible with *de jure* and *de facto* religious freedoms and religious pluralism”.³ This model characterizes England, Scotland and the Scandinavian countries⁴ and, as I have already explained in the previous chapter, is considered by some scholars as potentially able to accommodate a plurality of established faiths. I also clarified, however, why this is not a feasible solution. The third model, constitutional pluralism or plural establishment, implies “the constitutional and/or legal recognition of more than one organized religion”.⁵ Bader argues that this model can possibly only be found in Finland, as this country is characterized by the establishment of two state churches (the Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland). As Bader himself notes, this model corresponds to the one advocated by Modood for England. However, rather than providing a feasible example for the English case, the Finnish model highlights the problems that I have already

¹ Veit Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2003b), pp.55-91.

² Ibid., p.67 (italics in original).

³ Ibid., p.68 (italics in original).

⁴ For an account of the Norwegian system of church-state relations see Ingvill Thorson Plesner, “Should the State Support Religion? Human Rights and Sociological Perspectives”, in Sturla J. Stålsett and Oddbjørn Leirvik (eds.) with Peter Beyer, *The Power of Faiths in Global Politics* (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2004), pp.44-55.

⁵ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.68.

envisaged in Modood and Kastoryano's account. In Finland, Lutheran and Orthodox Christian religions have found institutional and constitutional recognition because for centuries they have been part of the nation's cultural and historical identity. This differs significantly from the case of England examined by Modood and Kastoryano, where plural institutional establishment is thought to be viable for accommodating the religious demands of recently arrived religious groups such as the Muslim community.

Certainly one might argue that, in the light of the Finnish experience, religious organizations such as the Catholic Church of England or the Jewish community, which have a longer history of integration into England's national culture, could be quite easily incorporated into the existing institutional framework (and, to some extent, they already are).⁶ What this argument proves, however, is the presence of a tight link between the historical integration of religious faiths into the national culture and history and the extent of their institutional and constitutional recognition. This leaves unanswered, therefore, the question of how the institutional recognition of Muslims and other newly arrived religious groups should be conceived. When dealing with non-Western religious traditions, therefore, the Finnish model ceases to provide useful insights and it fails to support Modood and Kastoryano's contention. I would like to clarify this point further. What I am critiquing here are the ideal models of weak or plural establishment and not their empirical versions, such as English or Finnish ones. Indeed to the extent that countries such as England, despite their regime of religious establishment, have recently carried out a process of gradual incorporation of non-Anglican religions at various political and institutional levels (especially at the local level), they in fact display some of the characteristics of Bader's non-constitutional pluralism (NOCOP) model which I am going to illustrate in the next paragraphs. This does not remove, however, the problem that maintaining the constitutional privilege of one (or several) religious faith(s) determines the presence of a rigid institutional framework, thus preserving a normative bias towards the officially recognized religion(s). This may prevent, in the long term, the genuine

⁶ See Tariq Modood and Riva Kastoryano, "Secularism and the Accommodation of Muslims in Europe", in Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou and Richard Zapata-Barrero (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.172-173.

full integration of non-established faiths within the polity.⁷

Bader also rejects Non-Establishment and Private Pluralism (NEPP), a model of religious governance which involves a strict separation between religious and political realms and allows religious pluralism in civil society but not at the political and constitutional levels.⁸ NEPP therefore represents the ideal version of the American model of church-state separation which I criticized in the previous chapter. Bader emphasizes how the idea of “difference-blind neutrality”, endorsed by political liberals (such as Rawls) and by advocates of NEPP, implies the discrimination of religious minorities and enhances “structural political and cultural inequalities among (organized) religions”.⁹ The separation between political and religious realms and, more generally, between public and private spheres, prevents an open and democratic public debate about religious issues and inevitably benefits dominant groups.¹⁰ Bader indeed highlights how the First Amendment to the United States (US) Constitution has not undermined “the political, social, and cultural or symbolic power of de facto established Protestant Christianity”.¹¹ This seems to confirm that state neutrality and church-state separation do not provide the best institutional arrangement for guaranteeing religious equality and pluralism.¹² According to Bader, NEPP therefore fails to provide difference-sensitive “relational neutrality” towards religions and it ignores the broad variety of possible ways in which the relationship between church and state can be conceptualized and institutionalized.

Above all, Bader emphasizes that, under NEPP, “interest groups (including churches) may form lobbies and may try to influence political parties and

⁷ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.207, p.240.

⁸ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.70. See also Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.203.

⁹ Veit Bader, “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?”, *Political Theory*, Vol.27, No.5, October (1999), p.600.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.601.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.603.

¹² For other accounts of religious non-establishment see Mark Jensen, “The Integralist Objection to Political Liberalism”, *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol.31, No.2, April (2005), p.166 and Steven Wall, “Perfectionism, Public Reason, and Religious Accommodation”, *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol.31, No.2, April (2005), p.297.

parliaments...However, such ‘political pluralism’ is supposed to prevent or forestall...the political institutionalization of particular interests, not to recognize or formalize it”.¹³ The distinction between mere “influence” and “political institutionalization” is essential for understanding the relationship between ideal model and empirical practice in the US. It is certainly true that, in the US, religious references pervade the swearing-in of the President as well as all the Congress and Supreme Court sessions.¹⁴ It is also true that some religious denominations, such as the evangelicals, bear a strong political and electoral influence upon the Republican Party.¹⁵ This undoubtedly defies the idea of a strict separation between political and religious realms in the US and therefore signals the distance between NEPP as a normative ideal and its concrete implementation(s).¹⁶ Indeed I also emphasized, in the previous chapter, how American secularism has been interpreted in two different ways throughout history, as either accommodationism or separationism.¹⁷ While the former is closer to the NOCOP model that I am going to examine in the next section, the latter can be considered as an approximate expression of NEPP. NEPP prevents the formal institutionalization of religious demands, intended either as the constitutional establishment of one or more churches, or as the politicization of religious claims through religious political parties. In this sense, it provides a useful ideal model for assessing the distinctiveness of American denominationalism and its normative and institutional incompatibility with the presence of religious political parties.

Non-Constitutional Pluralism (NOCOP)

The model endorsed by Bader, NOCOP, represents his response to the problems raised by the weak and plural establishment paradigms, as well as by NEPP. The distinctiveness of this model, according to Bader, is that it “combines constitutional dis-establishment or non-establishment with restricted legal pluralism (e.g. in family

¹³ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.205.

¹⁴ Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.9.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.53.

¹⁶ See, for example, Mary C. Segers, “In Defense of Religious Freedom”, in Mary C. Segers and Ted G. Jelen, *A Wall of Separation? Debating the Public Role of Religion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), p.88.

¹⁷ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*, pp.44-45.

law), administrative IP [institutional pluralism] (*de jure* and *de facto* institutionalization of several organized religions), institutionalized political pluralism and the religio-cultural pluralization of the nation”.¹⁸ This implies that religious groups are officially recognized not by incorporating their values into the constitutional framework of the polity but by expanding the legal, administrative and political spheres so as to guarantee that religious citizens are “integrated in the political processes of problem-definition, deliberation, presentation of decision alternatives and decision making”.¹⁹

Bader endorses especially a specific version of NOCOP, namely associative democracy (AD).²⁰ AD, Bader highlights, “rejects constitutional establishment. It supports the legal, administrative and political recognition of organized religions...and provides maximum accommodation to religious practices, constrained only by minimal morality and basic rights”.²¹ Bader argues that religious groups should be treated even-handedly, admitted to processes of deliberation and decision-making and granted the governance of services such as health care and education.²² Separate religious schools, he stresses, have often “contributed considerably to the integration of the respective religious communities into the common polity”.²³ This, together with a system of health care and social services provided for by religious organizations funded by the state, may help “to respond to increasingly individualized demands on one hand, to accommodate legitimate wishes and needs of ethno-religious minorities on the other hand”.²⁴ By integrating religious

¹⁸ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.69.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.69. As I have already suggested earlier in this chapter, some of these features characterize, for example, the present approach to the institutional recognition of non-Anglican religions in England. Nevertheless, in line with Bader I believe that the regime of weak establishment which characterizes England poses crucial normative and institutional obstacles to the gradual legal and administrative incorporation of non-Anglican religious faiths.

²⁰ I will use the two terms interchangeably.

²¹ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.20.

²² Ibid., p.20.

²³ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.83. I would like to point out that faith schools exist, for example, in the UK, where they are funded (and sometimes even built) by the state [see, for example the chapters in Roy Gardner, Jo Cairns and Denis Lawton (eds.), *Faith Schools: Consensus or Conflict?* (London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2005)]. This shows once more how the English/British framework of weak religious establishment also contains elements of NOCOP, although these are partly jeopardized, as I explained earlier, by the institutional privileged status of Anglicanism.

²⁴ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.84.

communities through the provision of essential public goods, NOCOP displays therefore its flexible and dynamic character.

In contrast with NEPP, Bader also endorses a shift from a politics of benign neglect, intended as “fairness-as-hands-off”, which tends to abstract from the particular cultural and religious traits of various groups, to a conception of “fairness-as-even-handedness” which addresses people according to their concrete and specific features and needs.²⁵ AD, according to Bader, represents a “third way” beyond the weak or plural constitutional religious establishment, which characterizes several European polities, and American demominationalism, which rejects the public role of religion and relegates it to the realm of civil society.²⁶ Bader’s conception of AD is accompanied by his endorsement of “moderate universalism and embedded impartiality”,²⁷ which represent an alternative to “exclusivist secularism or liberal reason restraints”.²⁸ According to Bader, AD provides a framework which is more favourable to religious minorities than other models of religious institutional pluralism. It guarantees “meaningful exit options”²⁹ to members of religious groups, thus rendering the abstract “right of exit” more substantial and relevant for concrete purposes. Furthermore, it provides a fine balance between associational autonomy and accountability of religious groups and associations before the state, promoting internal deliberation within groups and minimal state control as conditions for public funding.³⁰ Finally, Bader endorses the “idea of differentiated morality, i.e. standards of minimal morality have to protect the basic needs, interests and rights of all, including vulnerable minorities within minorities, such as minors and women”.³¹

AD therefore contributes to a “dialectic of institutionalization” which may prevent religious fundamentalism as “[r]eligions who vie for public money and want to exert political influence have to accept that polities vice versa exert influence upon

²⁵ Ibid., pp.87-88.

²⁶ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, pp.20-21.

²⁷ Ibid., p.21.

²⁸ Ibid., p.21.

²⁹ Ibid., p.30. For more details on the specific features of AD which, according to Bader, contribute to increasing the exit options for members of religious groups, see *ibid.*, p.213.

³⁰ Ibid., p.30.

³¹ Ibid., p.30.

them”.³² Additionally, Bader rejects “the liberal congruence that is so characteristic of comprehensive liberal or democratic morality”³³ and highlights how the presence of a minimal state may ensure instead a broader range of “morally legitimate cultural options”³⁴ within society. Furthermore, AD provides one of the best answers to the risk of cultural and religious “Balkanization” and is preferable to integrationist approaches for dealing with the problems arising within culturally and religiously divided societies.³⁵ Most importantly for a normative theory of religious political parties, Bader also emphasizes how AD ensures that “central organizational and representational structures by the respective religions emerge as far as possible from below, to avoid the...great threat to religious autonomy through external state-crafting from above”.³⁶ This responsiveness to religious demands emerging from civil society certainly renders AD hospitable to the channelling bilingual agency of religious political parties.

Finally, AD provides a better balance, than pillarized and corporatist models of NOCOP, between a flexible institutional framework and the need to give political voice to various religious groups facing an ever-changing religious landscape.³⁷ Indeed Bader highlights how, by encouraging “not only multi-level politics but also...multi-layered schemes of overlapping, partly competing and partly reinforcing obligations, loyalties and commitments”,³⁸ AD promotes in fact the development of common, inter-group commitments towards the unitary polity. This renders AD different from models of consociational democracy and pillarization, characterized by “government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy”,³⁹ and also clarifies its relationship with

³² Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.77.

³³ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.209.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.209.

³⁵ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.79. For a model which, in line with the Ottoman *millet* system, involves the risk of “Balkanization”, see Lucas A. Swaine, “Institutions of Conscience: Politics and Principle in a World of Religious Pluralism”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), pp.93-118. For a critique of the *millet* system as inadequate for Western democracies, see Tordis Borchgrevink, “Globalizing Secularity? Human Rights between Belief and the Pragmatics of Civility”, in Sturla J. Stålsett and Oddbjørn Leirvik (eds.) with Peter Beyer, *The Power of Faiths in Global Politics*, p.62.

³⁶ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.238.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.208.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.249.

³⁹ Arend Lijphart, “Consociational Democracy”, *World Politics*, Vol.21, No.2, January (1969), p.216.

party politics. Indeed, although parties “in divided societies...are crucial in voicing the interests of communal groups”,⁴⁰ their role in consociational politics has not always been seen as unproblematic. Rosenblum highlights, for example, how compromises and power sharing among elites, which characterize consociational models of democracy, may contribute to eluding the societal cleavages which normally underlie partisan divisions, thus preventing regulated rivalry among political parties and replacing the latter in providing a link between social groups and government.⁴¹ Other critics emphasize instead how consociationalism may artificially reinforce subcultural divisions, therefore leading to the reification of ethnic cleavages and exacerbating intraethnic competition.⁴² This may enhance factional interests, thus jeopardizing the possibility of pluralistic unanimity and regulated rivalry which ought to characterize partisan politics. Either way, then, consociationalism seems to undermine the bilingual agency of political parties and the normative criteria of party politics, establishing that parties ought to seek a balance between particular and general interests and avoid both factionalism and unitarism.

Bader’s constant emphasis on the need to maintain a balance between communal loyalties and national obligations signals his intention to proceed beyond both a monistic and a purely fragmented conception of the polity. Bader’s central claim, in this sense, is that “[t]o the degree that ‘communal groups’ have meaningful autonomy and group representation, and further experience this as satisfying...they can and usually do accept obligations towards the overarching polity, allowing strong commitments to develop”.⁴³ This certainly signals his intention to avoid the reinforcement of societal fragmentation which traditionally characterizes models of pillarization and consociational democracy. Furthermore, although neither political

The central features of consociational democracy include the presence of a grand coalition, mutual veto among subcultural groups, proportionality and segmental autonomy [see Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977)].

⁴⁰ Arend Lijphart, “Constitutional Design for Divided Societies”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.15, No.2 (2004), p.102.

⁴¹ Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp.101-102.

⁴² Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1985), p.575.

⁴³ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.249.

parties nor party elites play a significant function in Bader's NOCOP model (an aspect that I will critique in the next section of this chapter), this paradoxically provides a better framework for party politics. The absence of party elites, leading subcultural segments and artificially enhancing societal divisions, confers to NOCOP and AD a more fluid and flexible character, able to deal with ever-changing societal divisions (including religious ones) and to guarantee a more appropriate space for religious party pluralism. It might certainly be legitimate to argue that the legal and administrative pluralism advocated by Bader may risk leading to the same kind of political and societal fragmentation which characterizes consociational democracy. Yet, as I will explain more extensively in the next pages, it is through the idea of an institutionalized political pluralism, rather than through the legal/administrative recognition of religious faiths, that Bader's NOCOP introduces a novel and sounder framework for allowing religious party pluralism. This, I will show, helps to guarantee both (potential) political representation for all religious groups and respect for political and institutional unity, therefore eschewing the extreme fragmentation which characterizes consociational polities.

A Critical Assessment of NOCOP

Compared to the plural establishment model suggested by Modood and Kastoryano, Bader's NOCOP guarantees a more feasible balance between the cultural and religious identity of the majority and religious equality, and therefore provides a much more dynamic and flexible framework for accommodating the demands of an ever-changing plurality of religious groups and the expression of religious partisan identity. In Bader's NOCOP, religious demands are welcomed into the process of public deliberation, and the expansion of the legal, administrative and political spheres (the latter to be intended as the realm of ordinary politics) aims to provide an inclusive framework for both old and new religious faiths. Equality is guaranteed by ensuring that all voices are heard. Identity, instead, may be preserved by the fact that majority religious groups can bring their collective history, values and tradition into the deliberative arena, therefore enhancing their stance in front of newly arrived religious communities. The main difference from the plural establishment model is that, in Bader's version of NOCOP, neither identity nor equality is conceived in

static terms. Instead, they both become contestable during the process of public deliberation and the dynamics of their reciprocal interaction may help to expand the common understanding of the national public culture. Bader's NOCOP certainly provides broad normative and institutional space for religious political parties as it promotes "participation in public fora and hearings, inclusion in advisory councils and corresponding consultation rights and duty to listen".⁴⁴

Yet I do not believe that there is a significant difference, from a normative point of view, between the legal and administrative recognition of organized religions invoked by Bader and the constitutional establishment of one or more religions. I illustrated in the previous chapter the main problem emerging from Modood and Kastoryano's model of plural religious establishment, namely the fact that it underestimates the complexity of the historical process by which religious values are incorporated into the national culture and the qualitative difference between Christianity and some non-Western religious faiths. This, I argued, makes it difficult to guarantee the right balance between identity and equality and shows the unfeasibility of the plural establishment model for dealing with the demands emerging within religiously plural societies.

However, Bader's version of NOCOP presents analogous problems at a lower level of analysis. Incorporating alien religious values into the legal or administrative framework of a (for example) predominantly Christian society may simply raise again the same questions which are raised by constitutional pluralism. Legal provisions in the area of family law, for example, are not mere procedural devices but they often reflect the cultural and religious background of a society, even when they have acquired more "secular" meanings. In other words, even though a society may be deeply secular at present, its legal framework may still reflect certain moral values which were originally religious in nature. Although the religious import of these values may no longer be recognized by the citizens, there may still be a

⁴⁴ Bader, "Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism", p.69. In this sense, I believe, NOCOP defies Modood's conclusion that "[t]here are certainly advantages in allowing organized religion corporatist influence [e.g. through a Council of Religions] rather than encouraging it, or obliging it, to become an electoral player" [Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p.147].

widespread perception that the values embodied in the legal provisions regarding (for example) family law bear a cultural and social significance which deserves respect and cannot be ignored.⁴⁵

A similar problem emerges if we consider the spheres of health care provision and education. As I have illustrated, Bader argues that entrusting religious communities with the responsibility of providing such basic services may in fact enhance, rather than jeopardize, their cultural and political integration. This argument is quite controversial. Meira Levinson, for example, emphasizes how models of education, such as the English one, which aim to accommodate excessively the demands of religious children and parents, risk undermining social and political unity. By enhancing children's religious private values, Levinson argues, the English model may potentially prevent children from being exposed to different people and cultures and from detaching themselves from their own cultural background(s). In this way, it may be unable to provide them with the public virtues necessary for the coexistence of plural religious groups in a democratic polity.⁴⁶ I am not arguing, here, against legal and administrative pluralism as such. I am only stressing the fact that, despite Bader's endeavour to avoid the problems involved in constitutional pluralism, similar difficulties may arise from the legal and administrative incorporation of religious demands which characterizes NOCOP.

NOCOP and Religious Political Parties

Having unveiled the normative problems raised by Bader's idea of the legal and

⁴⁵ This is, I believe, one of the main issues arisen in February 2008, after the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams publicly stated that it would be soon inevitable to incorporate some of the provisions of the Islamic *Shari'a* into the British legal framework, especially in the field of family law, where many Muslims already de facto abide by Islamic rules rather than British ones [(BBC News, "Sharia law in UK is 'unavoidable'", 7 February 2008 [online]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/7232661.stm> [accessed 4 June 2008]. See also Murad Ahmed and Frances Gibb, "From Leyton to Dewsbury, Sharia courts are already settling disputes", *The Times*, 8 February 2008 [online]. Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article3330657.ece> [accessed 4 June 2008]. Many of the critiques raised against Reverend Williams did not stem, I believe, from strictly religious considerations. Many considered that integrating the Islamic provisions in the British Law would undermine the unity of the legal system and display a lack of respect towards the cultural heritage of the British nation, a heritage deeply shaped by Christian principles and values. Hence, the Archbishop's statement was seen as outrageous or at least controversial.

⁴⁶ Meira Levinson, "Liberalism versus Democracy? Schooling Private Citizens in the Public Square", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.27, No.3, July (1997), pp.340-341.

administrative incorporation of religious groups, I would like to turn my attention to the idea of the political integration of religious faiths that Bader also advocates. Contrary to constitutional integration, but also to legal and administrative pluralism, political incorporation implies that organized religions should be “integrated in the political processes of problem-definition, deliberation, presentation of decision alternatives and decision making”.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Bader argues, organized religions should emerge from below rather than be shaped by the state in a top-down fashion.⁴⁸ By granting religious communities freedom of association and refusing the neat divide between political and religious realms, Bader’s NOCOP guarantees broad space of action for religious organizations and religious parties in particular. This, according to Bader, may contribute in moderating religious values, making them compatible with liberal democratic institutions and principles and preventing religious fundamentalism.

The political integration of religious instances, then, may certainly contribute to the presence and functioning of religious political parties. Indeed Bader emphasizes how religious parties “undergo the transformational pressures of liberal democratic institutions and, eventually, contribute to integrate huge masses of believers into liberal democratic polities”.⁴⁹ Bader also highlights how “[g]ranting minority religions wide associational freedoms and meaningful political representation compatible with liberal democracy does not threaten political stability and unity but, eventually, helps to integrate them into a thin liberal democratic polity compatible with reasonable pluralism”.⁵⁰ Religious political parties are, according to Bader, one of the channels through which this process can be institutionalized, thus contributing to political stability and to the democratization of religious claims. Bader’s account seems therefore to grant importance to religious parties, yet it is not entirely convincing. Religious political parties seem to be, for him, only one among many vehicles for institutionalizing religious pluralism and guaranteeing the democratization of religious instances. Although AD and NOCOP provide, in my view, a suitable ideal institutional framework for the presence and functioning of

⁴⁷ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.69.

⁴⁸ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.238.

⁴⁹ Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, p.84.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.85.

religious political parties, I believe that Bader does not spell out sufficiently the particular traits of religious partisan identity.

Religious parties, his model seems to imply, can be included within NOCOP as long as they abide by the rules and constraints of a minimally liberal democratic framework. This approach overlooks therefore an understanding of the creative agency of parties, namely their power to re-shape comprehensive views and societal demands in a way compatible with the institutional and constitutional framework within which they operate. This power, as I argued extensively in the first and fourth chapters, is grounded in the normative criteria of party politics. Only by looking at the bilingual nature of religious political parties can NOCOP be fully understood and made viable. Rather than simply inserting religious political parties within NOCOP, then, it is necessary to show that parties, in ideal terms, are crucial for providing the institutional balance between unity and pluralism advocated by Bader.

First, according to Bader, institutionalizing political (rather than constitutional) pluralism would guarantee the inclusion of all religious communities into the process of public deliberation. Yet Bader does not provide sufficient normative reasons for explaining why religious groups ought to enter the process of deliberation that he carefully aims to ensure through political institutionalized pluralism. In other words, the presence of an inclusive framework does not necessarily provide sufficient reasons for expecting religious groups to participate in the deliberative process, through religious parties, associations etc. Bader seems to overlook the fact that certain illiberal, undemocratic or fundamentalist religious groups may simply not recognize the legitimacy of the framework within which deliberation and decision-making are to be conducted. Furthermore, such groups may not even understand the need for a deliberative process, as they may be convinced that their views are the only true ones and that they would not benefit from engaging with different (religious, moral, ethical etc.) perspectives. AD and NOCOP certainly meet the criteria of inclusiveness, relational neutrality and even-handedness, but they fail (at least in the version provided by Bader) to grasp the crucial role of religious political parties in guaranteeing the legitimacy and effective functioning of a deliberative

framework. Religious political parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics that I illustrated in the first chapter are especially useful for sustaining an inclusive public deliberation involving religious matters. Thanks to their bilingual identity which defies the public/private divide, their acknowledgement of pluralism and of a common constitutional framework (e.g. a liberal democratic one), and their commitment to trial in electoral politics, religious political parties can help to sustain the kind of deliberation advocated by Bader within NOCOP. Outside party politics any commitment to such a deliberation risks remaining normatively unwarranted, or at least institutionally unfeasible.

Second, Bader highlights how the separation between church and state also presupposes the idea of a qualitative difference between religious and secular arguments in public deliberation and the consequent conviction, endorsed by many liberal theorists, that public reason must be secular, i.e. it must not derive its justification from theological premises. As religious reasons rely on theological grounds which are not endorsed by every citizen, it is unfair, secularists argue, to adopt them in public deliberation and in decision-making processes.⁵¹ Bader denies the equation between “public” and “secular” reasons as this precludes the participation, in deliberative processes, of those religious citizens who genuinely support liberal democracy while, on the other hand, it does not provide an answer to the risk of “secular fundamentalisms”⁵² and of “illegitimate scientocracy or expertocracy”.⁵³ According to Bader, therefore, public deliberation does not require secular arguments, but rather arguments compatible with, and supportive of liberal democracy.⁵⁴ “To treat people fairly”, Bader argues, “does not mean that we have to abstract from all their cultural and religious particularities but to take them into account in an evenhanded manner”.⁵⁵ Furthermore, simply equating public reasons with secular reasons might just reproduce, against religious citizens, the same discrimination applied by secular citizens against the use of religious arguments in

⁵¹ Bader, “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?”, pp.610-611. See the analysis that I conducted in chapter 7.

⁵² Bader, “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?”, p.612.

⁵³ Ibid., p.614.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.612.

⁵⁵ Veit Bader, “Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously. Arguing for an Institutional Turn. Introduction”, *Ethical Theory and Social Practice*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2003a), p.6.

public deliberation. This might easily lead to a sense of alienation among religious citizens.

The solution proposed by Bader, I explained earlier, is the idea that both religious and secular reasons should be publicly evaluated on the basis of their compatibility with a minimal conception of liberal democracy. Rather than preventing any controversial issue from entering the realm of public deliberation, Bader argues, “one has to develop the duties of civility, such as the duty to explain positions in publicly understandable language, the willingness to listen to others, fair-mindedness, and readiness to accept reasonable accommodations or alterations in one’s own view”.⁵⁶ Strict separationism, Bader argues, “seems clearly not to be required by decent and liberal democratic morality and politics”.⁵⁷

As I have already illustrated in the first part of this chapter, in his later work Bader increasingly highlights the difference between “minimal morality” and “liberal democratic morality”.⁵⁸ Bader indeed argues that “there are some basic normative standards for the accommodation of religious diversity that apply to all polities [and that] there are additional normative standards that apply only to liberal democratic polities”.⁵⁹ This shift towards a minimalist universal morality is accompanied by his conviction that “a liberal state should not be morally neutral regarding all and every way of life but only with regard to those that are ‘justice-respecting’ or compatible with minimal morality”.⁶⁰ Minimal morality, according to Bader, must include “basic rights to security...to subsistence...to basic education and basic healthcare, a certain minimum of due-process rights, freedom of conscience, toleration, minimal though not fully ‘equal’ respect and...even...minimal though not fully equal representation for all those affected from political decisions”.⁶¹ Religious faiths, according to Bader, can learn to become “minimally moral” thanks to the moderating role of political institutions, internal processes of doctrinal learning and the role of multi-party

⁵⁶ Bader, “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?”, p.614.

⁵⁷ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.109.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.82.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.72.

democracy, as in the case of Catholic parties between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century⁶² and of recent Islamist parties in Turkey.⁶³

However, despite Bader's shift towards a minimal conception of universal morality, thinner than a liberal democratic one, his version of NOCOP still remains normatively unwarranted. If left unspecified, it may still be interpreted by some liberal secular citizens as the requirement to translate religious arguments into secular ones, on the grounds that only the latter can provide the toleration, equal respect, equal representation and publicly understandable vocabulary invoked by Bader. The need to tell the "whole truth",⁶⁴ strongly advocated by Bader, may thus risk being jeopardized (as in the case of the exclusivist conceptions of the public political realm that I assessed in the seventh chapter) by the presence of secular conversational constraints. Bader⁶⁵ does criticize the approach to religious pluralism displayed by contemporary liberal theorists (arbitrarily excluding religious arguments from public deliberation and neglecting the prospect of moral disagreement also regarding the constitutional essentials). He also argues that "public reason should be freed from cognitive, rationalist assumptions, allowing emotions as reasons",⁶⁶ thus implicitly endorsing a form of "epistemological holism".⁶⁷ Nevertheless, I believe, only by focusing on religious political parties can we understand the true significance of the epistemological holism invoked by Bader, including its institutional implications and its normative legitimacy. I am going to spell out the flaws of Bader's account in the next section.

Religious Political Parties, Epistemological Holism and Pragmatist Deliberation

First, Bader does recognize that religious political parties "undergo the transformational pressures of liberal democratic institutions and, eventually, contribute to integrate huge masses of believers into liberal democratic polities".⁶⁸

⁶² Ibid., pp.119-120.

⁶³ Ibid., p.122.

⁶⁴ Bader, "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?", p.618.

⁶⁵ Bader, "Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously. Arguing for an Institutional Turn. Introduction".

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.5.

⁶⁷ For an illustration of the concept of "epistemological holism", see Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.84-90.

⁶⁸ Bader, "Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism", p.84.

By channelling religious views, within the constraints of minimal morality, democratic religious parties (e.g. Christian Democratic parties in 19th century Europe)⁶⁹ can contribute to the moderation and integration of religious instances into secular polities, thus fostering public interest and the common good.⁷⁰ Yet Bader focuses too much on the external constraints encountered by religious political parties (such as the Christian Democratic ones) and risks reducing his argument to an empirical appraisal of the moderating influence of democracy upon religious parties. He therefore also risks overlooking the distinctive way in which political parties convey religious values into the political realm and the normative rationale behind it. Christian Democratic parties in 19th century Western Europe, for example, represented novel institutional bodies which had to abide not only by the external rules imposed upon them by the institutional and constitutional arrangements of Western European states, but also and especially by the normative criteria of party politics. Respect for the constitutional framework, acknowledgment of pluralism and commitment to the trial of elections and of public deliberation were the normative criteria that these parties had to comply with in order to be faithful to preserve their bilingualism.⁷¹ Therefore, although Bader does consider religious political parties as one of the vehicles through which political deliberation should be conducted, he does not appreciate enough their uniqueness and the importance of their presence within NOCOP. It is not clear, indeed, at which institutional level the kind of deliberation advocated by Bader (with its normative constraints) would have to be carried out, if not at the level of party politics.

My critique seems to be confirmed by Bader's own conclusion that, despite the contribution that religious parties may bring to democratic politics, his model of NOCOP may in fact reduce the demand for religious parties and contribute to accommodating religious demands. "By guaranteeing meaningful autonomy, selective cooperation, and political representation for ethno-religious minorities", Bader argues, "it [i.e. AD] reduces the demand for separate religious political parties and it helps prevent communal cleavages from completely conquering and

⁶⁹ Bader, "Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously. Arguing for an Institutional Turn. Introduction", p.11.

⁷⁰ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.252.

⁷¹ I will address these issues in chapter 11.

segregating party systems”.⁷² In other words, although Bader displays some kind of appreciation for religious parties, he does not grasp their normative and institutional distinctiveness. Once the functions usually provided by religious parties are supplied by the regime of AD that he devises, parties become dispensable.

Second, Bader does not explain on which grounds his minimal liberal democratic morality is normatively justified. Indeed he adopts a “non-foundationalist”⁷³ approach and critiques those theorists who “stick to the idea that rights and democracy can only be stable if we also agree on their deep foundations”.⁷⁴ Therefore he fails to clarify to which extent his minimal morality differs from a thicker liberal morality. The difference, if any, seems to only be one of degree. The concepts of freedom of conscience, toleration and equal respect, through which he defines minimal morality, still display a strong liberal bias. Although these principles may be crucial for guaranteeing an open and inclusive public deliberation, Bader fails to provide the rationale for them. This also implies that Bader cannot explain why these values ought to be endorsed by religious citizens and preferred, for example, to alternative, substantive normative principles (e.g. religious fundamentalist, Marxist etc.) as the foundations of a political framework.

Third, as a consequence of the previous point, Bader’s model does not provide a feasible and warranted explanation of how passions and emotions could be conveyed into the public realm, communicated and defended in publicly understandable terms. He fails to explain what common denominator may ensure the feasibility of an inclusive public deliberation and of an “epistemological holism”. His answer seems to be, once again, that reasons are publicly understandable if they are compatible with a minimal universal morality. However, given the unwarranted character of the minimally moral (and covertly liberal) framework that he suggests, his account does not offer a valid point of reference against which religious and secular views may be assessed in public deliberation. An alternative theoretical framework is therefore required.

⁷² Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.252.

⁷³ Ibid., p.114.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.114.

I believe that Cheryl Misak's model of pragmatist deliberation, which I illustrated in the sixth chapter, helps to fill the conceptual and normative gaps which characterize Bader's account. First, pragmatism provides the rationale for epistemological holism, through the idea that moral beliefs, like scientific ones, are both fallible and susceptible to experience.⁷⁵ I explained in the sixth chapter how Misak also extends this argument to ethical beliefs, that is, comprehensive conceptions of the good, therefore including religious beliefs as well. In response to Misak, I argued that moral and ethical beliefs are different but that it might be feasible to conceive a universal inquiry concerning the meta-ethical foundations of ethical values and, derivatively, conceptions of the good intended in their inherent value. This helped me to reconceptualize Misak's epistemological holism in more specific terms.

Second, pragmatism provides the rationale for legitimately adopting a liberal democratic political framework. This is grounded in the idea that holding a belief and, more crucially, aiming for the truth, require being sensitive to moral experiences and therefore not arbitrarily excluding certain people from discussion on the basis of their race, gender, religion etc. Misak, we saw, argues that "[t]he pragmatist's route to the preservation of autonomy, equal moral worth, and respect for persons is that preserving these things is a vital part of deliberation aimed at the truth".⁷⁶ Political parties, we have seen, ought to comply with the normative criterion of loyal opposition. Within liberal democratic polities, this entails that they ought to respect the principles of autonomy, equal moral worth and respect for persons. Therefore, even though it might be questioned whether deliberation aimed at the truth (conducted outside the realm of party politics) does in itself involve such principles, it can certainly be asserted that, when such a deliberation is conducted through political parties within liberal democratic polities, it ought to abide by these principles.

⁷⁵ Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, pp.84-90. See also Keith Ward, *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.107 and Bhikhu Parekh, "The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse", in Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Religion, Politics and Peace* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p.82.

⁷⁶ Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, p.115. According to Misak, "if we are to take seriously the experiences of all, we must let ways of life flourish so that they can be articulated and we must let people articulate them for themselves" (ibid., p.114).

Without adopting a foundationalist approach (that Bader indeed rejects), in a liberal democratic polity the coexistence of religious claims with the kind of minimal liberal democratic morality advocated by Bader can especially be sustained, normatively and institutionally, by religious political parties. As I explained in the sixth chapter, parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics reflect the central traits of pragmatist deliberation. Parties ought to submit their views to the trial of elections, acknowledge pluralism and display loyal opposition. They ought to offer their claims to the judgment of other parties and public opinion, and accept challenges to their views and policy proposals in parliamentary debates, electoral campaigns and, most straightforwardly, at the ballot box. The pragmatist model of democratic deliberation seems thus particularly suitable for making sense of party politics.

This provides the grounds for connecting epistemological holism and a deliberation conducted in publicly understandable terms. Religious political parties, intended as the semi-institutional channels of a pragmatist model of democratic deliberation, may crucially contribute in sustaining Bader's NOCOP model in a way that Bader himself fails to envisage, as he relegates parties to a secondary and accessory role. Religious parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics convey into the public realm views, values and arguments which are no longer merely religious in nature but have acquired instead a novel qualitative shape and are therefore suitable for a deliberation about substantive values, carried out in publicly understandable terms. A religious political party complying with ideal of party politics that I presented in the first chapter conveys into the public political forum not merely a religious view but a-religious-view-among-many-views, a-religious-view-committed-to-testing-and-trial and a-religious-view-respecting-the-common-constitutional-framework.

This also applies to any other comprehensive doctrine or belief (including secular ones) conveyed by political parties which abide by the normative criteria of party politics. My conclusion is therefore that, although Bader's NOCOP is the institutional arrangement most suitable to the presence of religious political parties, it

can only be normatively justified and institutionally sustained if religious political parties, ideally intended, are placed at its core and given a prominent role, rather than be considered as one among many vehicles for institutionalizing religious pluralism. This signals their importance for guaranteeing the political integration of a plurality of religious claims.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have endorsed a specific model of church-state relations, Bader's NOCOP, and reinterpreted it in the light of the normative theory of deliberative perfectionism that I developed in the fifth chapter. On the one hand, I have argued that NOCOP provides the most inclusive and flexible framework for the presence and functioning of religious political parties. On the other hand, I have critiqued Bader's version of NOCOP and shown that it lacks valid normative foundations. Only by placing religious political parties at its centre, I concluded, can NOCOP acquire normative soundness and institutional feasibility. The outcome of my enquiry has therefore been both to illustrate which framework best provides the normative rationale and the institutional space for religious party politics and, at the same time, to highlight how religious political parties are indispensable for sustaining that framework, both normatively and institutionally.

In the fourth and final part of my thesis, I will analyse two specific examples of religious political parties, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) in Turkey and the former Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana* - DC) in Italy, and assess whether these parties conform to the normative ideal of religious partisan identity that I have devised. As I explained in the first chapter, although the AKP has not invoked, so far, “the *religious transformation of state and society*”,⁷⁷ it can still be considered a religious party insofar as it is “deeply involved in Islamic social ethics and cultural norms, and stresses the religious values and interests of its pious electorate”.⁷⁸ In this sense, the AKP satisfies the criteria of the definition of “religious party” that I presented in the first chapter. After having

⁷⁷ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.8 (italics in original).

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.8.

characterized Turkey's regime of religious governance with a monistic and top-down form of laicism (i.e. state control upon religion) rather than with secularism (i.e. the separation between political and religious realms), I will argue that Turkey's monistic laicism ought to be replaced by a form of "pluralistic laicism" analogous to NOCOP and that this is the kind of framework the AKP ought to invoke in order to safeguard the political and institutional space for its religious partisan identity and to make religious party pluralism possible in Turkey.

Part IV

AKP and DC: A Normative Assessment

Chapter 10 - Secularism, Laicism and Religious Political Identity in Turkey

There is certainly some truth in the idea that Turkey, at least until the introduction of multipartyism in 1946, was an authoritarian polity, and that the centralistic top-down approach of the Kemalist establishment has continued to operate until recently. In this sense, it is probably correct to argue that “all the Turkish political parties formed during 1946-1950 and afterwards, are...Republican Parties, regardless of whether or not they genuinely accept republicanism”.¹ Ahmet Kuru² traces this situation back to a form of “assertive secularism” which has been dominant in Turkey since the Kemalist revolution, especially during the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP) between 1923 and the end of the 1940s. Contrary to regimes of “passive secularism”, where the state is even-handed towards all religions while guaranteeing their public visibility, “assertive secularism” involves the state endorsement of a secular comprehensive doctrine in the public realm while religion is relegated to the private sphere.³

Due to this regime of assertive secularism, religious political parties in Turkey have always had to face strict constraints in the public political realm. On 28 February 1997, for example, a military coup dismantled the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP), forerunner of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* - FP) and of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP), due to its alleged link with Islamic militancy. The coup stressed once more the presence of deep structural and institutional obstacles to the formation and political expression of Islamist

¹ Kemal H. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: the Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), p.249. See also Eric Rouleau, “Turkey: Beyond Atatürk”, *Foreign Policy*, No.103 (1996), p.71.

² Ahmet T. Kuru, “Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party”, in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), pp.136-59. Kuru traces the assertive secularism, which characterizes Turkey and France, back to the presence of an *ancien régime* characterized by the coalition of monarchy and dominant religion. The lack of an *ancien régime* in the United States, according to Kuru, explains the latter's passive secularism [Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.14].

³ Kuru, “Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party”, p.137.

political parties in Turkey. The AKP, on which I am focusing here, was founded in 2001 by the more reformist and pragmatist wing of the FP, after that party, like the RP, had been disbanded by the Constitutional Court due to its alleged role as a focal point for Islamic militancy.⁴ The reformist leadership of the AKP, of which Tayyip Erdoğan (the current AKP leader and Prime Minister of Turkey) and Abdullah Gül (the current President) are the most prominent members, has emphasized from the beginning the need for an impartial and more tolerant state, allowing religious doctrines to manifest themselves in the public sphere.⁵ It has therefore called for a more inclusive public sphere and for the shift from an assertive to a more passive secularism. The AKP has displayed so far a more cautious approach (i.e. than its disbanded forerunners) towards the Kemalist establishment. While maintaining its roots in political Islam, the party embraced a democratic conservative outlook which allowed it to win over 34% of the public vote at the 2002 general elections, making it the main party in Turkey, an electoral success confirmed and enhanced at the 2007 general elections.

Despite contrary statements by Erdoğan,⁶ the religious character of the AKP is widely endorsed. Graham Fuller, for example, considers the AKP “an overtly religious party...even though it has been prudent and careful in not advertising its religious roots.”⁷ Although the AKP has not invoked, so far, “the *religious transformation of state and society*”,⁸ it can still be considered a religious party insofar as it is “deeply involved in Islamic social ethics and cultural norms, and stresses the religious values and interests of its pious electorate”.⁹ Its programmatic

⁴ For a detailed historical account of the National Outlook Movement and the development of Islamist political parties in Turkey since the 1970s see Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* (Santa Monica: Rand Publications, 2008), pp.40-50; M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 207-264; Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp.159-226.

⁵ Kuru, “Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party”, p.140

⁶ See Deborah Sontag, “The Erdoğan Experiment”, *New York Times*, May 11 (2003) [online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/magazine/the-erdogan-experiment.html> [accessed 10 February 2009].

⁷ Graham E. Fuller, “Turkey’s Strategic Model: Myths and Realities,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.3 (2004), p.52.

⁸ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.8 (italics in original).

⁹ Ibid., p.8.

platform and ideological stance, therefore, are very much rooted in a religious Islamic worldview.

For other authors, the AKP could be considered as the Muslim counterpart of Western Christian democratic parties, as it endorses democratic values, but is influenced and inspired by Muslim beliefs.¹⁰ Indeed, soon after the AKP's victory in the general elections of November 2002, the Turkish Islamist writer Ali Bulaç highlighted the divergence between the public statements of the party leadership and the attitude of the party's grassroots supporters. While discarding an Islamist political agenda, the latter still saw the AKP as a "Muslim democrat" party and provided it with mass support on these grounds.¹¹ In this sense, therefore, the AKP can be considered a religious party on the basis of the broad definition that I provided in the first chapter.

Turkey's Constitutional Court and the Ambiguities of Turkish Secularism

The Constitutional Court, in Turkey, has never abandoned a strongly assertive conception of secularism but it has always endorsed, at least in principle, the separation not only between religion and politics but, more radically, between religion and worldly affairs (e.g. education, family, dress etc.).¹² Secularism is not seen by the Constitutional Court (or at least not only) as a mere institutional tool aiming to protect the state from religion and vice versa, in order to guarantee their respective autonomy, but rather as an intrinsic good, i.e. as "Turkey's philosophy of life".¹³ As the main scope of the Constitutional Court is to preserve its conception of strict secularism at all costs because it is intrinsically good, therefore there is not much space left for alternative institutional arrangements, even if the latter were found to be suitable for achieving similar concrete results, namely the autonomy of both political and religious realms. In other words, a perfectionist conception of

¹⁰ See William Hale, "Christian Democracy and the JDP: Parallels and Contrasts", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), pp.66-87.

¹¹ Ibid., p.67.

¹² The Turkish Constitutional Court's ruling on *The Welfare Party* case on January 16, 1997, no.1998/1, quoted in Kuru, "Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party", p.144.

¹³ Ibid., p.145.

secularism does not leave much scope for institutional change.

The single-party regime which characterized Turkey until 1946 was therefore determined, at least in part, by the assertive (and perfectionist) conception of secularism, endorsed by the Kemalist regime and emphasized by the Constitutional Court. In ideal terms, political parties require an impartial common institutional arrangement in order to be able to comply with the normative criteria of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry. Therefore multi-party politics is in principle undermined by a common framework grounded in a specific comprehensive doctrine, e.g. the assertive secularism endorsed by the Kemalist regime and by the CHP.¹⁴

By distinguishing between “political” and “cultural” domains, Turkey’s Constitutional Court aims both to protect culture from political “contamination” and vice versa.¹⁵ For example, Dicle Kogacioglu observes, during the discussion that led to the Court’s decision to ban the Kurdish People’s Labour Party (*Halkin Emek Partisi* – HEP) on the basis of its separatist views, the Court acknowledged the presence in Turkey of different ethnic groups but it also emphasized that “different traditions...could not become a basis for claiming minority status and an amalgam of derivative rights. Such claims, the Court argued, could not but amount to separatism”.¹⁶ In relation to the case of the RP, instead, the Court highlighted the importance of separating religion from politics in order “to safeguard the dignity of religious life”.¹⁷ The idea that particular interests or societal demands should not be formalized through political institutionalization corresponds to the model of Non-Establishment and Private Pluralism (NEPP) that I illustrated in the previous chapter in relation to Veit Bader’s analysis. As in that model, one might argue, in Turkey pluralism is “relegated to the ‘private sphere’ of civil society and is not allowed to spill over into political society or the state, particularly not into decision-making”.¹⁸

¹⁴ This party, founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the founder of the Turkish Republic and its first President), remained the only officially recognized party in Turkey until 1946.

¹⁵ Dicle Kogacioglu, “Progress, Unity, and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties in Turkey”, *Law & Society Review*, Vol.38, No.3 (2004), p.435.

¹⁶ Kogacioglu, “Progress, Unity, and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties in Turkey”, p.446.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.451.

¹⁸ Veit Bader, *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*

The constraints imposed upon the formation of a religious political identity would therefore seem to arise, in Turkey, from the neat separation between religion and politics and between public and private realms. In this sense, the Court's apparent willingness to "protect" the cultural realm (through this separation) could be read as the attempt to guarantee the flourishing of religious expression within civil society, that is, at the social (but not at the political) level. On that basis, one might then argue, the existing framework ought to be replaced by a less rigid interpretation of the separation between the two spheres, in the form of a "passive secularism" more favourable to the expression of religious partisan identity. However, this might raise two problems. From a normative point of view, secularism, intended as the separation between political and societal realms, in principle prevents the politicization of religious and other perfectionism claims, whether it is assertive or passive. In ideal terms, this kind of framework is not compatible with the presence of religious parties.

From a more empirical point of view, we should be careful and not be misled by the ambiguities of the interpretation of secularism displayed by the Turkish establishment. Although the Constitutional Court has often emphasized the idea of separation between religion and worldly affairs (including political affairs), in the case of Turkey (as in Rawls's theory) this separation is only apparent. The real difficulty, in both cases, lies instead in the subordination of religion to politics and of the non-public to the public realm. Kogacioglu himself, for example, notes how the Court's call for the separation between culture (including religion) and politics "was inherently political in its implications as it insisted...on the Court's ability to simultaneously define where culture ends and politics begin".¹⁹ In other words, the paradox of the Court's approach was in the fact that it appealed to a distinction that it had itself made, from within the standpoint of one of the domains of the distinction (i.e. the political one). It is evident, from this, that "separation" for the Court means in fact "subordination" of religion and culture to the political domain and this poses normative problems further to those raised by the superficially neat separation of religion and politics.

(Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.203.

¹⁹ Kogacioglu, "Progress, Unity, and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties in Turkey", p.451.

Laicism and the Subordination of Religion to Politics

A closer examination of secularism will further enhance the idea that the subordination of religion to politics, rather than the separation between them, is the key normative concept for understanding the limits imposed upon religious political identity in Turkey. It is particularly useful to start from Andrew Davison's emphasis on the distinction between the terms "secular" and "lay".²⁰ The former, he argues, denotes the separation between religion and politics, that is, a negative relation between the two spheres, grounded in a Christian conception.²¹ This implies that, although secularism may sometimes degenerate into anti-religious behaviour and provisions, its aim is more often that of guaranteeing the loyalty, of non-religious people for non-religious reasons and of religious people for religious reasons, to the constitutional and institutional framework of a polity. This is fully consistent, Davison argues, with allowing the vitality of religion at the non-political, associational level, as in the United States (US).

This argument clearly resembles the Rawlsian distinction between public and non-public (i.e. associational) spheres. Secularism, in this sense, could be considered a tolerant and inclusive framework ensuring the social (but not the political) manifestation and expression of religious identity, as the case of the US clearly shows. Moreover, Davison's account of secularism, with its idea of the loyalty of both religious and non-religious citizens to the constitutional arrangement of a polity, seems to mirror Rawls's idea of an overlapping consensus. However, as I argued in the second chapter, the political conception of justice devised by Rawls is not sufficiently inclusive for allowing an overlapping consensus among most comprehensive views (both religious and non-religious) endorsed by citizens within pluralistic liberal democratic societies.²² Yet rather than with secularism, I believe, Rawls's political liberalism and his expansive conception of public reason bear

²⁰ Andrew Davison, "Turkey, a 'Secular' State? The Challenge of Description", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol.102, No.2/3, Spring/Summer (2003), pp.333-350.

²¹ For a critique of an essentialist understanding of Christianity and Islam, considering the separation of temporal and divine realms as intrinsic to the former but extraneous to the latter, see Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.153.

²² Davison, "Turkey, a 'Secular' State? The Challenge of Description", p.336. For a critique of Rawls's overlapping consensus as a model of secularism see Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism", in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.31-53.

significant similarities, in ideal terms, with “laicism”, i.e. the idea that religion and state affairs should not be separated and that, contrary to secular arrangements, “laicist political relations...may also retain the religion in a prominent, lay-defined, official role”.²³

Davison emphasizes how the principle of “laiklik” was soon adopted by the CHP in Turkey during the 1920s. Despite some secularizing moves (e.g. the abolition of the Caliphate, the replacement of the Islamic *Sharī’a* with the Swiss civil and the Italian penal codes etc.) the CHP kept religion under tight state control.²⁴ In this sense, then, religion remained “a constitutive element of the larger national bond”²⁵ and “a separate concern among other state concerns, not separate from politics or the state”.²⁶ Although the Kemalist establishment rejected from the beginning certain fanatical or reactionary expressions of Islam, it never invoked a total divorce between religion and politics. Indeed various authors, examining the ambiguities of the Turkish model of secularism, have played down the concept of “separation”, either intended as freedom *of* or (state) freedom *from* religion, and stressed instead the tight control of the political establishment upon religion in Turkey.²⁷ The institution which best symbolizes this state of things is the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which is under the direct control of the Prime Minister and promotes a moderate version of Islam. Through the Directorate “Islam...was integrated into the government structure, quite in keeping with the Ottoman pattern of including *ulama* [i.e. the Muslim legal scholars expert in Islamic studies and arbiters of *Sharī’a* law] within the state. It was, however, stripped of its original meaning in the Ottoman bureaucracy and reduced to a subservient role”.²⁸

²³ Davison, “Turkey, a ‘Secular’ State? The Challenge of Description”, p.337.

²⁴ Ibid., p.337.

²⁵ Ibid., p.340. For the use of Islam as a “common identity marker” by the Kemalist regime, see Sultan Tepe, “A Pro-Islamic Party? Promises and Limits of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party”, in Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party*, p.110.

²⁶ Davison, “Turkey, a ‘Secular’ State? The Challenge of Description”, p.341. Binnaz Toprak, for example, describes this process as one of “polity expansion” and “polity dominance” rather than one of “polity separation” [Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), p.57].

²⁷ See Kogacioglu, “Progress, Unity, and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties in Turkey”, pp.437-438.

²⁸ Umit Cizre Sakallioglu, “Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.28, No.2, May (1996), p.234.

The absence of an existing dualist institutional framework (i.e. church and state) analogous to the one present in France or, more generally, in Western European countries, stemming from the historical battles between popes and princes, sacred and temporal authority, determined therefore the specific nature of Turkish laicism.²⁹ While controlling religious expression from above, though, Kemalist laicism involved “the prohibition of political associations or parties seeking particularist religious support”.³⁰ Religion was protected by the state and guaranteed freedom “as long as and insofar as it was not utilized to promote any social or political ideology having institutional implications”.³¹ Despite “disestablishing Islam in the public sphere”,³² the Kemalist elite aimed not only to control religious expression within society but also to use religious values for legitimizing the state institutions and policies.³³ The Kemalist establishment embraced this rigid, top-down form of laicism due to the “exclusive nature of orthodox Islam”,³⁴ which would prevent any dialogue and compromise between state and religion. Yet this gave rise to a similarly exclusive state, unable to guarantee “an inclusive and pluralist understanding of religion”³⁵ or the kind of church-state cooperation and “twin tolerations”³⁶ which characterize several Western European polities.

This aspect points out the unidirectional, top-down relation between political and religious realms. Due to the internal bifurcation of the pre-existing Ottoman establishment, and to the subsequent supremacy of the political branch over the religious one, the main obstacle to the formation of religious parties in Turkey lies not in the state indifference towards religion but in the fact that the state controls both which religious values can be expressed (i.e. those which are compatible with

²⁹ See Serif Mardin, “Religion and Secularism in Turkey”, in Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (eds.), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Publishers, 1993), p.347. See also Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p.480.

³⁰ Ibid., p.499.

³¹ Ibid., p.499.

³² Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.23.

³³ See Sultan Tepe, “Religious Parties and Democracy: A Comparative Assessment of Israel and Turkey”, *Democratization*, Vol.12, No.3, June (2005), pp. 299ff and Sakallioğlu, “Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey”, p.245.

³⁴ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.149.

³⁵ Ibid., p.148.

³⁶ Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.213-253.

the strict secularism endorsed by the Constitutional Court) and where they can be expressed (i.e. at the social but not at the political and institutional levels).

Laicism and Political Liberalism

My analysis in the previous paragraphs provides therefore another striking parallel with those aspects of Rawls's political liberalism that I analysed in the second chapter. Both Kemalism and Rawls's theory share a "top-down" conception of the polity and allow religious (or other perfectionist) claims into the public political realm only as long as these contribute to enhancing a pre-existing constitutional framework.³⁷ Not surprisingly, while highlighting the subordination of religion to the state sanctioned by Article 24 of the 1982 Constitution (for matters concerning education)³⁸ and by the presence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs,³⁹ as well as the instrumental use of religion displayed by the Kemalist establishment,⁴⁰ Pinar Tank compares Turkey's "unorthodox understanding of secularism"⁴¹ to Rawls's political liberalism. Both exclude comprehensive doctrines (such as religious ones) from the public political sphere unless they somehow contribute to enhancing the existing constitutional and institutional framework.⁴² However, Tank also emphasizes how political liberalism requires a clear distinction between public and non-public reason and between public and private realms, a consensus "on what constitutes 'reasonable' behaviour as well as an agreement on the issues that can be included in the public arena".⁴³ These distinctions, he highlights, are not at all clear within the Turkish context. The idea of secularism, which is embodied in the Constitution, is in fact contested by large sectors of Turkish society and it does not

³⁷ See Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p.46.

³⁸ Pinar Tank, "Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity", *Turkish Studies*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2005), p.5.

³⁹ However, the Directorate of Religious Affairs tends to favour the Sunni branch Islam, thus displaying a biased way of controlling religious expression (Rabasa and Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, p.12).

⁴⁰ Tank, "Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity", p.11. This instrumental way of conceiving religion, however, has been embraced throughout the years not only by the Kemalist establishment and by the CHP but also by political parties which were closer to Islamist constituencies, such as the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti* - DP). See, for example, Sakallioğlu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey", p.237 and Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p.61.

⁴¹ Tank, "Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity", p.5.

⁴² See Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.32.

⁴³ Tank, "Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity", p.12.

seem therefore to display the degree of democratic legitimacy that a constitutional arrangement requires.

As secularism in principle establishes the separation between public and private spheres, it is therefore obvious that the lack of consensus about the precise meaning of this separation makes it difficult to achieve a common understanding of what belongs, respectively, to the private and the public domains. In Turkey, according to Tank, “the clear divide between the public and private spheres advocated by political liberals wavers over several issues”.⁴⁴ One of the most prominent ones, he highlights, concerns the banning of the headscarf in public places. The headscarf issue emphasizes the reciprocal permeability of public and private spheres, therefore defying the neat separation that secularism would require. What is most interesting, however, is that Tank does not in fact contest political liberalism as such. Rawls’s doctrine, in his view, represents a coherent theoretical model against which the limits of the Turkish polity can be (negatively) evaluated.

However, I highlighted in the second chapter how the lack of a clear distinction, in Rawls’s account, between constitutional and ordinary politics, and between public political realm and civil society, render the constraints of public reason all-encompassing. There is a correspondence between political liberalism and Kemalism, and the latter should be seen as an embodiment of laicism rather than secularism. Moreover, the main problem emerging from Tank’s analysis is the continuity, rather than separation, between public and private realms. Due to this continuity, the political expression of religious identity has been seriously jeopardized in Turkey. Furthermore, the arbitrariness of the boundary between public and private spheres implies that “the AKP walks the tight boundary between what is acceptable and unacceptable, considered reasonable and unreasonable, in the sphere of secularity, but to a certain degree it walks that boundary blindly”.⁴⁵

This is especially important, in my view, for religious political parties. As I explained in the first chapter, only the presence of an institutional and constitutional

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.12.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.15.

consensus, preceding partisan divisions, allows a party to be “a subdivision compatible with unity rather than a division that disrupts it”.⁴⁶ Only consensus on fundamental values and principles at the community level allows parties to comply with the normative criterion of loyal opposition and to be a “parts-of-the-whole” rather than disruptive factions. The lack of such a stable consensus seems to be one of the main problems in Turkey and the major source of the AKP’s “blindness”. This has allowed the Kemalist regime to shift continuously the boundaries between politics and religion, sometimes preventing religion from entering the public realm, sometimes allowing its presence in order to help the establishment to face more dangerous threats (such as the one coming from the radical left). This seems to highlight, then, that the problem in Turkey derives not so much from the “invisibility” of the boundaries between politics and religion, and of the constitutional consensus which defines them, but rather from their “arbitrariness”.

In this sense, it might even be argued that the Kemalist establishment has adopted a kind of secularism *à la carte*. On the one hand, it has endorsed top-down laicism and continuity between political and non-political realms, in order to assert its control upon the latter, by “bureaucratizing religious functionaries and scholars so as to make them subservient to the state” and “controlling the legitimacy and representative capability of public religious discourses by defining a ‘mainstream’ Islam”.⁴⁷ On the other hand, it has sometimes advocated bottom-up secularism (i.e. separation between political and non-political realms) in order to protect itself against unwelcome religious demands, while at other times it has allowed religious views into the public political realm when these were useful for enhancing the regime or for fighting non-religious political threats.

Consequently, I would argue, religious political parties have had to confront a double challenge. On the one hand, the top-down laicism of the Kemalist regime, characterized by a tight state control upon religious matters, has conditioned which religious values, issues and demands could be conveyed into the public political

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.16.

⁴⁷ Soon-Yong Pak, “Cultural Politics and Vocational Religious Education: The Case of Turkey”, *Comparative Education*, Vol.40, No.3 (2004), p.338.

realm by religious parties. On the other hand, the lack of a clear and legitimate constitutional consensus (and the consequent fluctuation of the boundary between private and public realms) has conditioned the way in which religious parties can carry these values, that is, their partisan identity itself. The lack of a clear constitutional consensus deprives parties (religious and not) of one of the two crucial components of their bilingual identity (i.e. the reference to a unitary framework), the other being the expression of comprehensive conceptions of the good, as I explained in the first chapter. In this sense, the abovementioned arbitrariness of the constitutional consensus can contingently disrupt the parties' understanding of the boundaries between political and religious realms and perhaps posit risks to their capacity to formulate a settled partisan identity and settled purposes. Therefore the risk of being banned, encountered by every Islamist party in Turkey (a risk that became reality for the parties forerunners of the AKP, the RP and the FP), is due not only to their violation of the boundaries between public and non-public domains but, more fundamentally, to the absence of clear boundaries and of one of the preliminary conditions for the existence of a plural party system, that is, a broadly endorsed constitutional consensus. That only certain kinds of parties have been allowed to exist in Turkey is not a contingent aspect but rather the consequence of the fact that the constitutional and institutional consensus has always been a partial and artificial one, established and imposed from above (i.e. by the army, by the Kemalist elite, etc.) rather than democratically emerging from civil society. This has implied that the party system, in republican Turkey, has been distorted from the beginning and it has never fully mirrored the values, demands and cleavages (especially religious ones) present within Turkish society.

Turkey's regime of religious governance, therefore, does not conform to the ideal model of NOCOP that I defended in the previous chapter and which, I explained, is the most suitable, in ideal terms, to the presence and functioning of religious political parties. It does not provide an impartial and inclusive framework for the channelling of religious claims into the public political realm and it prevents religious parties from being able to adhere to the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter.

Religious Political Identity, Secularism and Laicism

As religious political parties are bilingual and exist on the borderline between political and non-political spheres, they are particularly affected by the way in which a lay political establishment may impose constraints upon the expression of religious values in the public political realm. The basic meaning of the idea of “religious political identity” is that, in ideal terms, religious arguments as presented by religious political parties are qualitatively different from religious arguments offered by a church, a religious sect or other non-partisan organizations.⁴⁸ As I explained in the first chapter, political parties (including religious ones) ought to display loyal opposition, acknowledgement of pluralism and commitment to electoral politics. This can contribute in reshaping religious views in more moderate terms. The ideologies and manifestoes of religious parties which comply with the criteria of party politics and preserve their bilingualism, therefore, do not merely mirror pre-existing religious doctrines. Instead, they offer novel political alternatives, resulting from their unique bilingual nature.

Consequently, it may not be appropriate for the AKP simply to reject the Kemalist ideology because it represents a betrayal of the true meaning of secularism, which should guarantee the autonomy of all religious communities through the separation between religion and politics. Although secularism belongs in some ways to the cultural and historical tradition of Islam (as in the Ottoman Empire, where the *millet* system guaranteed the legal autonomy of the various religious communities present within the territory of the Empire)⁴⁹ it would not be the most suitable framework for the presence of religious parties such as the AKP. As I explained in the ninth chapter, when examining the NEPP model of church-state relations, pure secularism is not suitable, in ideal terms, for the specific, bilingual nature of religious parties, for their religious political identity. It may certainly guarantee autonomy for religious groups and communities but not necessarily for religious political parties. The fundamental distinction between associational and partisan identities, which I have often stressed

⁴⁸ For this point, see Rosenblum, “Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.45.

⁴⁹ Feroz Ahmad highlights how “[t]he millet system suggests that the Ottomans made no attempt at assimilation, only a pragmatic integration that allowed the empire to function smoothly” [Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest For Identity* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), p.10].

in the previous chapters, should not be overlooked.

The AKP ought not to invoke the discontinuity between Turkey's political and religious spheres either. Although this might end the subordination of the latter to the former, and might prevent state interference in the affairs of religious communities, it might also defy the rationale for the existence of religious political parties. In other words, if secularism implies the distinction between political and religious spheres, this should then work in both directions. The state should be indifferent to the life of religious citizens but the latter should not be allowed to enter the political realm by, for example, constituting religious political parties. Therefore I disagree with the idea that the AKP ought to call upon mere "freedom of religion from state intervention and the protection of religious rights".⁵⁰ This might be enough to guarantee the freedom of religious communities within civil society. However the AKP is a religious political party, deeply relying on Islamic values and interests in order to appeal to its electorate.⁵¹ Its programmatic platform and ideological stance result from the politicization of a religious worldview. Preventing this process of politicization, by strictly separating religious and political realms (i.e. through a strictly secular regime), would seriously reduce the normative and institutional space for religious parties such as the AKP.

It is quite significant to think of how religious political parties are in fact absent in those countries which are normally most identified with an ideal secular establishment, such as the US. As I explained in the seventh chapter, the NEPP ideal model, of which the US secular framework represents a concrete (though imperfect) manifestation, allows the presence of a multitude of religious groups and communities at the level of civil society, while preventing at the same time the formation of religious parties. It would seem paradoxical, therefore, to argue that the AKP ought to call for a secular regime thus intended.⁵² One might then suggest that the AKP ought to invoke a regime of "passive secularism", as intended by Kuru,⁵³

⁵⁰ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.133.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.8.

⁵² See Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p.499-500.

⁵³ Kuru, "Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party", p.137.

and for state even-handedness towards all religions. However, although the distinction between assertive and passive secularism might be interesting, in fact it overlooks the crucial aspect of the problem that I am currently addressing. If secularism, contrary to laicism, implies separation between private and public realms, it may not be sufficient simply to distinguish between its “assertive” and “passive” versions. This distinction could be intended as one of degree but it would not bear any relevance for political parties. A “passive” form of secularism would only involve greater freedom of religious expression at the social, not at the political level.

The NEPP model might be considered analogous to a form of passive secularism, as it guarantees state even-handedness towards all religions and their public expression at the level of civil society. Yet at the same time, as I explained in the ninth chapter, no religious party could in principle be allowed in this kind of institutional framework, if intended in ideal terms. This passive secular model, therefore, would not be very beneficial to the AKP. Once we understand that secularism implies the separation between public and private realms, its degree of inclusiveness towards religious expression depends on how we delimit the sphere of the private in relation to the public and the political. The private sphere may thus include associations, clubs etc., but it may also be restricted to churches, or even just families. Despite these differences of degree, the idea itself of “separation” is never questioned. Perhaps assertive secularism is to be intended as a substantive value in itself, whereas passive secularism is better characterized as a *modus operandi*, i.e. as an institutional arrangement which does not imply substantive normative judgments regarding the actual “goodness” of such a framework, and of the distinction between politics and religion. Yet passive and assertive secularism only express different ways of understanding the extent of the “private” realm, the only realm in which religious expression may be allowed. Despite the Turkish Constitutional Court’s apparent endorsement of an assertive form of secularism,⁵⁴ though, neither assertive nor passive secularism characterizes Turkey and neither could be invoked by the

⁵⁴ The Turkish Constitutional Court’s ruling on *The Welfare Party* case on January 16, 1997, no.1998/1, reported in Kuru, “Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party”, p.144.

AKP consistently with the party's requirement to preserve its bilingualism and abide by the normative criteria of party politics. The normative requirements of secularism are simply incompatible with those of (religious) party politics.

Pluralistic Laicism and Non-Constitutional Pluralism (NOCOP)

While a regime of passive secularism might in principle be useful for fostering religious expression within civil society (but not within the public political realm), what is really at stake in Turkey is the distinction (and contrast) between monistic top-down laicism and pluralistic bottom-up laicism. Kemalism involves continuity, not separation between political and non-political realms, public and private spheres. A truly secular state, for example, would never prevent women from wearing the headscarf in public places as it would rather display a certain degree of indifference (or at least even-handedness) towards religious matters. Given the lay, rather than secular, character of the Turkish establishment, the AKP ought to invoke a more inclusive and pluralistic form of laicism rather than a clearer separation between politics and religion. Inclusiveness would imply a greater permeability of the political realm to the expression of religious values emerging from civil society and conveyed through party politics. Pluralism, instead, would entail the possibility, for religious parties, of promoting their values within the political sphere without having to conceive them as different ways for legitimizing the institutions and policies of the monistic Kemalist establishment. In other words, this would prevent the normative fault that I also found in Rawls's political liberalism, namely the idea of considering religious and comprehensive views only as ways for enhancing the political conception of justice which provides the normative foundations of the state basic structure.

By arguing that the AKP ought to invoke laicism rather than secularism, I do not intend to claim that laicism is better than secularism in fostering religious pluralism per se. Secular polities which conform to the NEPP model (such as the United States) do allow a high degree of societal religious pluralism. Yet NEPP does not allow, in ideal terms, religious partisan identity, i.e. the politicization of religious views through religious political parties. Consequently these secular societies may

forego those benefits which can arise from the presence of religious parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics. Such parties can contribute in channelling and moderating comprehensive views and making them suitable for pluralistic democratic deliberation. They can also guarantee the balance between “partiality” and “wholeness”, particular and general principles, pluralism and unity under a common constitutional framework. Their absence might bear serious consequences for purely secular polities by leading to either a gradual fragmentation of society, through an increasing “factionalism” of views and values, or to the gradual convergence of the political establishment towards a monistic (religious or secular) conception of the political community. This clarifies in what sense pluralistic laicism would be better suited for allowing and encouraging the flourishing of religious political identity through political parties. To be able to channel religious claims while abiding by the normative criteria of party politics, religious parties require continuity between political and non-political realms. Therefore a lay system can in principle provide for them a more suitable framework than a secular regime of separation.

The kind of pluralistic laicism that I am endorsing here presents important normative links with the NOCOP model illustrated in the previous chapter. Two features are especially crucial in allowing this connection. First, by defending pluralistic laicism, I endorse both religious pluralism within civil society and the possibility of its politicization through religious political parties. These are two of the central traits of NOCOP. Second, the analysis of Turkey’s top-down laicism, which closely resembles the French model of religious governance, helps to reject Bader’s view that the latter should be identified with NEPP.⁵⁵ France and Turkey do not display a regime of strict separation between politics and religion, but rather a top-down control, by the state, of religious expression, concerning both the content and the locus of this expression. Furthermore, both France and Turkey are characterized by a distinctive form of establishment in which the established doctrine is not a religious faith (as in England or, more strongly, in Greece or Israel) but rather a lay, and

⁵⁵ Bader, *Secularism or Democracy?*, p.203.

therefore political religion.⁵⁶ This kind of lay, non-religious establishment differs from that of countries such as Belgium, where laicism (or secularism) “is one of several comprehensive doctrines [funded by the state], not the one officially recognized and imposed by the state on people”.⁵⁷

This enhances the case for envisaging a normative link between NOCOP and pluralistic laicism. The AKP ought to call for a form of disestablishment in which Turkey’s institutional arrangement would be disentangled from monistic laicism. In order to satisfy the AKP’s demands, the latter ought to be replaced by a thinner and more inclusive constitutional framework, normatively grounded in a pragmatist conception of deliberation, in the way illustrated in the previous chapter. This would allow the spillover of religious demands into the political sphere and protect societal and religious pluralism from the dominance of an institutionalized monistic (religious or lay) creed. Both conditions are normatively and institutionally crucial, in ideal terms, for the presence of religious political parties.

Religious Partisan identity, Pragmatist Deliberation and the AKP

Religious parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics depicted in the first chapter can enhance a pluralistic understanding of laicism by joining the idea of partiality within a whole with the lay idea of the continuity between political and religious domains, an idea which allows religious values endorsed within civil society to enter the public political realm. Moreover, as explained in the previous chapter, religious parties are necessary for guaranteeing the normative and institutional feasibility of Bader’s version of NOCOP. Most importantly, religious parties provide the crucial link between pluralism and pragmatist deliberation.

Only a procedural, rather than substantive conception of laicism, can guarantee societal pluralism and the access of religious claims into the public political realm

⁵⁶ Yet Kuru argues that the presence of multiparty democracy in France and of authoritarian single-party rule in Turkey rendered the former less exclusionary than the latter towards religion (Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*, p.32). Even today, Kuru argues, an illiberal policy such as the ban on headscarves can be considered democratic in France, where the majority of the population endorses it, but undemocratic in Turkey, where the majority opposes it (ibid., p.245).

⁵⁷ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion*, p.169.

through religious parties. A narrower, procedural understanding of the foundations of a lay polity, such as that which characterizes NOCOP, provides in ideal terms a more inclusive framework for religious political parties. Grounding the limits and constraints imposed upon the expression of religious political identity in the values and principles of pragmatism (as argued in the fifth and sixth chapters) enhances the legitimacy of the state before religious political parties while at the same time establishing the legitimate democratic limits within which the parties' political activity ought to be conducted. The pragmatist version of deliberative democracy guarantees a more inclusive public sphere as different religious (or, more generally, comprehensive) views are allowed to enter the public realm as they are, without having to present their views as different perspectives from which the constitutional essentials and an independent political ethic ought to be endorsed. This therefore allows the presence even of religious parties conveying views which Rawls would define "unreasonable" just because they may not contribute in endorsing and enhancing the constitutional framework.

The present analysis helps us therefore to clarify the normative relationship between religious political parties and an ideal NOCOP grounded in pragmatist democratic deliberation. Religious claims are often considered inapt to enter the public political sphere due either to their partial, non-universal significance or to their lack of discursive and argumentative character.⁵⁸ However, "[r]easons are public not because their grounds are or can be shared by all...but because they are open to inspection and can be intelligently discussed by anyone with the requisite knowledge or willingness to acquire it".⁵⁹ Inspection and deliberation are what religious parties, ideally intended as both carriers of perfectionist views and expressions of pragmatist deliberation, guarantee. Therefore religious parties which, within liberal democracies, comply with the normative criteria of party politics, transform religious claims into qualitatively novel (political) claims, suitable to democratic politics.

A NOCOP grounded in pragmatist deliberation, therefore, offers a suitable normative

⁵⁸ Jürgen Habermas, "A Genealogical Analysis of the Cognitive Content of Morality", in *Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.44.

⁵⁹ Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006a), p.327.

framework for religious parties. On the one hand, it provides an inclusive political domain, permeable to the expression of religious values emerging from civil society. On the other hand, it guarantees a high degree of societal and institutional pluralism, favouring and enhancing, as we have seen, the pragmatist character of religious political parties. I therefore contend that, in order to allow the presence and functioning of religious parties such as the AKP, and the potential benefits they can bring, Turkey ought to embrace a regime of religious governance analogous to my pragmatist deliberative version of NOCOP.

The AKP, more than other Islamist parties in Turkey, has been trying to foster a democratization of Turkey's institutional framework by questioning the democratic legitimacy of Turkey's strongly secular constitutional arrangement. In this way, while formally respecting so far Turkey's constitutional arrangement, expression of the Kemalist ideology, the AKP has contributed in reopening a debate on the fundamental values of Turkey's political framework. The party has both acknowledged the framework in which it operates and challenged it from within, thus managing to "play the electoral and regime games simultaneously".⁶⁰ In this way, therefore, the AKP has complied so far with the normative criterion of loyal opposition and preserved its bilingualism.

Furthermore, the moderation of Islamic instances that the AKP has undergone, both before and after obtaining power in 2002, has certainly been conditioned by extrinsic, structural factors. These include for example, the repressive nature of the Kemalist establishment and its practice of banning Islamist parties (a practice of which the AKP's forerunners had been victims) as well as the constraints imposed by the European Union (EU) membership project, especially by the need to comply with the Copenhagen criteria (i.e. democratic governance, respect for human rights, functioning market economy and acceptance of the obligations and purpose of the EU), the rules that establish whether a country is qualified to join the EU.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.28.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.3. Yet the EU constraints have also been exploited by the AKP in order to challenge the Kemalist establishment and acquire internal legitimacy (see *ibid.*, pp.203-204). For the Copenhagen criteria, see European Council, *Conclusions of the Presidency*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 21-22 June 1993 [online]. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf [accessed

Yet the AKP's moderation and democratization could and should also be seen as the results of the party's increasing compliance with the normative criteria of religious partisan identity (i.e. respect of the constitutional framework, acknowledgment of pluralism, commitment to electoral trial etc.). We cannot tell with certainty whether the original intention of the AKP's founders was to play the democratic game in order to impose a theocratic regime or whether they were genuinely committed to democracy. The decision to engage in partisan politics may indeed not signal a "deep ideological pre-commitment to democracy".⁶² Yet it might represent a minimal effort to conceive one's views and policy proposals in relation to the public good rather than as factional and divisive instances, especially when the founders of a party are fully aware of the normative constraints they will have to abide by. This might engender a process of democratic acculturation and, as the AKP case shows, might contribute to the gradual moderation and integration of a group's originally radical claims.

Therefore the AKP case helps to understand better the idea that pluralistic deliberation, conducted through the medium of partisan politics and party pluralism, can be a vital mechanism for channelling and moderating religious claims in a way that favours democracy. Religious political parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics can contribute in integrating religious groups and religious values into democratic politics, by tying religious claims to the normative and legal constraints of party politics and engendering a virtuous circle of democratization. This is why religious parties ought to be welcomed in democratic polities, rather than be excluded, as Turkey has always done in the past, on the basis of their alleged antidemocratic or anti-secular goals. Exclusion is much more likely to cause the radicalization of religious demands, when these are fostered outside the limits and checks of party politics. It might also risk concealing the presence of fundamental flaws in the constitutional and institutional framework of the regime in which such parties operate, as well as the lack of widespread consensus on the fundamental values of the political order.

5 March 2009].

⁶² Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", p.41.

State Corporatism in Turkey and the AKP

Finally, I would like to illustrate how the AKP, thanks to its anti-statist stance, has contributed in challenging the “state corporatism” which has characterized the Turkish establishment since the foundation of the Republic. “State corporatism” refers to a top-down conception of the relationship between state and society, by which the former aims to control the latter and uses political parties and other groups as institutional tools for preserving the existent state structure rather than fostering democracy.⁶³ According to the Kemalist establishment, “a political party with its constitution or programme is considered to be part of a State’s constitutional order and is not an association”.⁶⁴ This conception of political parties as branches of the state establishment deeply contrasts with the overall account provided here, which considers parties as bilingual carriers of comprehensive conceptions of the good.⁶⁵

By inheriting the Ottoman tradition of maintaining links with social actors through “state-granted privileges”,⁶⁶ the Kemalist populist ideology has used parties as “effective gatekeepers”⁶⁷ of the state apparatus, thus enhancing a uni-directional channelling process from above which has undermined the free expression of religious partisan identities.⁶⁸ Within this context, the rise of political Islam represents one of the few examples of political development from below, although it has seriously been constrained by the 1982 Turkish constitution, which forbids the formation of political parties grounded in ethnic, religious, regional or class

⁶³ See Paul Kubicek, “The Earthquake, Civil Society, and Political Change in Turkey: Assessment and Comparison with Eastern Europe”, *Political Studies*, Vol.50 (2002), p.763.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.403.

⁶⁵ Moreover, the Turkish establishment has often displayed a restrictive, top-down approach also towards non-partisan associations. See, for example, David Shankland, “Religion”, in Brian W. Beeley (ed.), *Turkish Transformation: New Century, New Challenges* (Huntingdon: The Eothen Press, 2002), p.87.

⁶⁶ Kubicek, “The Earthquake, Civil Society, and Political Change in Turkey: Assessment and Comparison with Eastern Europe”, p.763. Regarding the Ottoman system, Metin Heper highlights how its patrimonial character lacked the presence of “countervailing powers” [Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Beverly: The Eothen Press, 1985), p.14] able to curb the central authority, as in European feudalism.

⁶⁷ Kubicek, “The Earthquake, Civil Society, and Political Change in Turkey: Assessment and Comparison with Eastern Europe”, p.763.

⁶⁸ See also Walter F. Weiker, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), p.150 and Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Legacy of the Kemalist Republic”, in Touraj Atabaki (ed.), *The State and the Subaltern: Modernization, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran* (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007), p.106.

identities.⁶⁹

Indeed, according to Mustafa Erdodan, the 1982 Constitution (unlike the more liberal 1961 Constitution) conveyed both the idea of a “nationalized Islam” and the opposite view that Islam ought to be relegated to the private sphere and not be used by political parties in order to obtain political influence.⁷⁰ The Kemalist idea of a “cult of the state”⁷¹ and a monistic state corporatism aiming to assimilate various groups into the state administrative structure, in order to obtain their loyalty and ideological support, have imposed clear limitations upon political parties and party pluralism. State control of all political activity (including political parties) and the assimilation of the latter into the former imply that “the political order loses its role as a mediator between the state and civil society”.⁷²

The AKP has been questioning not only the “secular” character of the Kemalist establishment but also and above all its state corporatism. Rather than calling for a top-down process of Islamization, the AKP “conceives and frames secularism as a matter of democratization/liberalization and wants it to be conceived as such so that consensus between the parties can be achieved”.⁷³ Modernization is intended by the AKP not as a cultural revolution aiming to substitute a novel set of (Islamist) values for an old (secularist) one, but rather as a redistribution of political power allowing the emergence of the dynamism of Turkish society. Furthermore, the AKP has constantly emphasized the importance of dialogue and consensus among different societal groups, and especially the idea that “democratic legitimacy needs to be constantly reproduced in the actions and policies of a political party. The AKP is therefore...susceptible to societal signals and aims at gaining the trust of the people”.⁷⁴ This is an important aspect as it suggests a shift towards an upward kind

⁶⁹ Kubicek, “The Earthquake, Civil Society, and Political Change in Turkey: Assessment and Comparison with Eastern Europe”, p.764.

⁷⁰ Mustafa Erdodan, “Religious Freedom in the Turkish Constitution”, *The Muslim World*, Vol.89, No.3-4, July-October (1999), p.378.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.379.

⁷² Doğu Ergil, “Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No.1 (2000), p.45.

⁷³ Menderes Çınar, “Turkey’s Transformation Under the AKP Rule”, *The Muslim World*, Vol.96, July (2006), p.476.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.478.

of political channelling. The AKP's ability to gather the demands of a broad constituency has been the result of the party's mobilization strategy and of the aspiration, by traditional religious networks, "to redefine the political center of Turkish politics in terms of their values...to expand the boundaries of the public sphere and make the political institutions representative of the people rather than of the official state establishment".⁷⁵

The AKP has thus avoided, so far, both the factionalist and unitarist degenerations of partisan identity that I illustrated in the first chapter. It has managed to maintain a balance between "partisanship and impartial governing, loyalty to the party and loyalty to the state, party interest and general interest".⁷⁶ By contesting the top-down Kemalist model, the AKP has not challenged the idea of secularism (or laicism) *per se* but rather the way in which this idea has been imposed upon civil society, a way which prevents the presence of religious political parties. What therefore distinguishes the AKP and accounts for its success is not only its capacity to guarantee greater visibility for religion in the public political realm but, above all, its ability to display compliance with the normative criteria of party politics while fostering political and institutional change.

Indeed the AKP has not merely been trying to foster a broader understanding of the constitutional consensus; it has also begun to challenge that consensus from within. The party's approval, in 2007, of a bill lifting the headscarf ban in all universities, led the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals to formally ask the Constitutional Court to close the party in March 2008, on the basis of its anti-secular activities. The AKP was found guilty of anti-secular activities but it was not disbanded, due to the lack of the qualified majority (of seven out of eleven votes) necessary for this measure to be implemented. The Court only halved the public funding destined to the party.⁷⁷ Yet the party's policy measures, such as the headscarf ban lifting, should not be interpreted as attempts to implement Islamist

⁷⁵ Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, p.257.

⁷⁶ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.65.

⁷⁷ "Turkey's court decides not to close AKP, urges unity and compromise", *Hurriyet*, 30 July 2008 [online]. Available on-line at: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/home/9547882.asp?gid=244&sz=29614> [accessed 29 June 2009].

values in the political realm. The AKP seems to be genuinely fighting for a more inclusive public sphere, one in which citizens may be free to express their religious identities without state interference.⁷⁸ The AKP's challenge to Turkey's controversial constitution, a challenge conducted through legal means, should thus not be considered as the expression of a factionalist strategy, merely aiming to undermine the existing constitutional framework.

On the contrary, the AKP has contributed in reintroducing, within the Turkish polity, the necessary tension between unity and democracy, between rights and liberties, a tension which has long been inhibited by the Kemalist establishment's monistic laicism. It has been legitimately challenging the undemocratic features of Turkey's constitutional framework in order to make it more hospitable to a plurality of political parties, including religious ones. The party claims that "secularism needs to be empowered by democracy to maintain religious freedom and social harmony"⁷⁹ and its anti-statist bottom-up conception of democratic politics involves the idea that "the community has the right to define political institutions through democracy".⁸⁰ This is also the reason why the AKP must test blindly the boundary between political and religious realms. The absence of a previous religious partisan model able to provide the "right" balance between "partiality" and "wholeness", particular and general interests, makes the AKP's attempt a pioneering one in Turkish politics. The tension arises both from the absence of a clear constitutional consensus, establishing the separation between political and religious realms, and from the AKP's willingness to gradually modify, democratically, that consensus.

The AKP can therefore gradually contribute in reshaping and democratizing the Turkish institutional landscape not from above but through the interplay of state and societal instances, in a way that only a political party complying with the normative bilingualism of party politics, such as the AKP, can do. Indeed the AKP is the first religious party, in Turkey, to have complied with the normative criteria of party

⁷⁸ In this sense, I agree with Rabasa and Larrabee that "[t]he AKP's agenda of opening space for religion in society could increase the ability of non-Muslim religious communities to operate more freely" (Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, p.66).

⁷⁹ Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey*, p.179.

⁸⁰ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, p.98.

politics and preserved its bilingualism. On the one hand, it has renounced the unitarist tendencies of the *Refah Partisi* (RP), which aimed to simply replace the Kemalist apparatus with its own religious “state-centred structures”⁸¹ and to realize “its own project of ‘moral development’ in a top-down fashion”.⁸² On the other hand, it has rejected the factionalism of radical Islamist movements such as Turkish (or Kurdish) Hizballah (*Hizbullahî Kurdî* – HK), a Kurdish Sunni Islamist militant organization. As Hüseyin Velioğlu, the movement’s deceased leader, once argued, “[p]arty politics is not...a way of preaching Islam. Even if legal political parties are Islamic, Hizballah must stand against them because of their strategy. Partaking in elections...means recognizing the legitimacy of the status quo and thus a great sin”.⁸³ The AKP leadership would certainly agree with this characterization of party politics, intended in normative terms (i.e. how parties ought to behave). Loyal opposition is a crucial normative criterion of party politics and even radical Islamists, such as Velioğlu, recognize that entering party politics might signal a minimal commitment to it. Velioğlu is probably also aware that, once a religious movement has entered party politics, its claims might be subject to a gradual process of democratization and moderation. However, instead of rejecting party politics in order to pursue a factionalist and terrorist strategy, the AKP has fully embraced the legal route and acknowledged the limits established by the Turkish constitutional framework, while trying to change such a framework from within.

This analysis confirms therefore two crucial points. First, as religious political parties conceive policy claims as rooted in religious values, only an open public political sphere, permeable to the bottom-up expression of religious demands, may allow their presence and functioning. I have identified this framework with a version of Non-Constitutional Pluralism (NOCOP) grounded in pragmatist deliberation. This is the kind of institutional framework that ought to be established in Turkey in order for religious parties such as the AKP to be able to exist and operate. Second, the AKP case shows that, despite the criterion of loyal opposition, religious political parties

⁸¹ Çınar, “Turkey’s Transformation Under the AKP Rule”, p.476.

⁸² Ibid., p.476. See also Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp.138-144.

⁸³ M. Kürşad Atalar, “Hizballah of Turkey: A Pseudo-Threat to the Secular Order?”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol.7, No.2, June (2006), p.327.

can in principle be important channels of democratic change, by conveying societal (e.g. religious) demands into the public political realm and therefore allowing the community to shape the political institutional framework through democratic means.

The AKP has put emphasis, as we have seen, on the need for reconciling democracy (the people's voice) with Turkey's secular political institutions, which are considered biased against religious citizens and therefore partly lacking democratic legitimacy. We have seen how the AKP has often been accused (e.g. by the Constitutional Court) of rejecting the fundamental values of the regime in which it operates, especially by pursuing anti-secular activities. Yet the AKP should not be considered an anti-system party, as it has genuinely displayed its acceptance of and respect for Turkey's constitutional framework. However, by invoking a democratization of Turkey's secular establishment it has performed an important task that I also attributed to anti-system parties in the fourth chapter. It has reopened the debate on the relationship between unity and democracy, by highlighting the flaws in the existing political institutions and the need to reassess them on the basis of the demands emerging from civil society through the democratic means of party politics.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the normative implications of religious partisan identity in Turkey at present, by analysing the AKP party currently in power. I argued that the notion of "secularism", if intended as the separation between religious and political domains, is not suitable for explaining Turkey's regime of religious governance. The idea of separation, which undermines the bilingual nature of religious partisan identity by preventing the politicization of religious values, contrasts with the strategy pursued by the Kemalist establishment, which has constantly attempted to maintain its top-down control over religious matters. I argued that the concept of "monistic and top-down laicism", implying the continuity between political and religious spheres, and the subordination of the latter to the former, is better suited for understanding religious partisan identity in Turkey, and the obstacles that the latter has had to face. I finally argued that the existing lay institutional arrangement ought to be replaced by the NOCOP model that I endorsed in the ninth chapter as the latter

provides a more inclusive framework for the presence of religious political parties.

It has recently been highlighted by William Hale⁸⁴ that Turkey's AKP could be compared to the Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe. The endorsement of a moderate promotion of religiously grounded values and policies, the acknowledgment of liberal democratic principles, an essential inter-class appeal, the refusal of state nationalism and the support of international cooperation are among the features which, according to Hale, allow a close comparison between the AKP and Christian Democratic parties. Furthermore, Hale highlights that democratic parties in Muslim countries have to renounce the project of an Islamic state and "restrict the role of religion in politics to those topics, such as education and morality, which are an accepted part of the religion-State dialogue in non-Muslim democracies".⁸⁵ As the AKP has clearly accepted this restriction, Hale argues, it can be considered, at least in this respect, analogous to the Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe.⁸⁶ In the next chapter I will therefore examine the relationship between a specific Christian Democratic party, i.e. the former Italian *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), and the Italian regime of religious governance. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive comparative analysis of AKP and DC but only to unveil the implications of my normative theory of religious political parties for assessing the DC and the regime of almost religious establishment which characterized Italy at least until 1984.

⁸⁴ William Hale, "Christian Democracy and the JDP: Parallels and Contrasts", in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), pp.66-87.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.74.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.74-75.

Chapter 11 - Religious Political Identity and Christian Democracy in Italy

The former Italian Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana* - DC), and Christian Democratic parties more in general, can be considered religious political parties according to the definition that I provided in the first chapter. As I explained there, the basic principles of Christian Democracy (e.g. personalism, subsidiarity and federalism) are deeply grounded in Christian doctrine and Catholic social teaching and cannot be defended “without the basis of Christianity”.¹ Despite not aiming to establish theocratic regimes, Christian Democratic parties display a deep link between their political platforms and Christian or Catholic principles. Some of the statements contained in the European People’s Party’s (EPP) Basic Programme and in the early programmatic documents of the DC, which I illustrated in the first chapter, testify the explicit reference to Christian values as the ideal foundations for Christian Democratic principles. This kind of religiously-inspired political platform is what characterizes religious political parties broadly intended.

Church and State in Italy between 1861 and 1922

In order to understand the role of religious parties in Italy, we need to briefly examine the historical evolution of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian state. Following the unification of Italy (1861) and the Holy See’s loss of Rome (1870), the Pope retired into the Vatican Palace, refusing any form of dialogue with the new Italian state. This phase showed the irreconcilability between Catholicism and liberal democracy and was characterized by the Italian Catholics’ opposition to the centralistic and anticlerical character of the new liberal state. A series of laws, approved by the new Italian Parliament in 1865, “provided for civil marriage and led to the suppression of religious bodies. Many of the most ancient monasteries and convents were taken over by the State, and numerous ecclesiastical organizations were suppressed”.² These measures considerably reduced the Church’s

¹ Luigi Sturzo, “The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy”, *The Review of Politics*, Vol.9, No. 1, January (1947), p.6.

² Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.216.

influence upon Italian society, especially in the field of education. Furthermore, “[i]n the 1890s many Catholic charitable institutions were taken over by the government”.³ All these measures, together with the end of the papal state, represented a radical change in a country which was almost entirely Catholic and where the Vatican had always played a central role in both spiritual and political matters. As a reaction to these measures, Italian Catholic citizens were prevented by the Church from participating in the Italian political life, both as voters and as candidates. This prohibition was officially sanctioned by the papal promulgation, in 1868, of the encyclical *Non Expedit*, which forbade both passive and active participation of Catholics in the political life of the new state. However, the *Non Expedit* inadvertently created “the basis for the emergence of a Catholic political identity. The formula *preparazione nell’astensione* (preparation through abstention)...was a means used by Catholic activists to turn electoral abstentionism into organizational preparation for future political struggles”.⁴

The approval of (almost) universal manhood suffrage in Italy (1912) persuaded the Church to become more involved in the political life of the Italian state. This culminated in the Gentiloni Pact (1913), through which the Church would guarantee its organizational and electoral support for conservative liberal candidates in exchange for the promotion, by the latter, of pro-Church policies. The emergence of the socialist movement and the outbreak of the First World War, however, raised expectations for a more direct political intervention. This led to the formation of the *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI) in 1919 and to the abrogation of the *Non Expedit*. Several factors pressed the Church to accept the formation of Catholic parties (such as the PPI in Italy): the possibility, for the Vatican, to control these parties by influencing internal factions; the conviction that, if the political organization of Catholics had become inevitable, it would be best served by pro-Catholic parties; finally, the idea that confessional parties would represent a political warranty against future anticlerical assaults.⁵

³ Ibid., p.216.

⁴ Ibid., p.180 (italics in original).

⁵ Ibid., p.181.

Two main features characterize therefore the pre-Fascist, liberal framework up to the advent of Fascism and the signing of the Lateran Pacts in 1929. First, the absence of an actual institutional arrangement defining the relationship between the Italian state and the Catholic Church; second, the openly anti-clerical character of the liberal state, exemplified by the abovementioned legislation in the fields of education, marriage law, ecclesiastical courts and Church properties. This framework bears several similarities with the one imposed by the Kemalist elite in Turkey. The latter is characterized indeed by religious non-establishment and by a top-down, authoritarian, laicism, preventing (or, at least, seriously opposing) the formation of religious political parties. Yet, one major aspect distinguishes the Italian pre-Fascist framework from the Turkish one. As noted in the previous chapter, Islam in Turkey did not possess an autonomous church to which the state could assign the independent control of religious affairs.⁶ This has certainly affected the way laicism is intended in Turkey and it has helped in fostering continuity between political and religious realms, rather than a dualist church-state institutional framework.

In pre-Fascist Italy, instead, despite the absence of a formal institutional arrangement between state and Catholic Church, the presence of these two distinct loci of authority prevented the full subordination of religious matters to political power, and this also contributed, as I will explain later, in preventing the Fascist regime from establishing complete institutional and moral control over the Vatican and, most importantly, over the (deeply Catholic) Italian society. Indeed, by looking at the main changes brought about by Fascism, it may be possible to indirectly envisage the positive features of the pre-Fascist liberal regime regarding the relationship between religion and politics and the presence of religious political parties such as the PPI.

Fascism and the Catholic Church (1922-1945)

One of the main changes produced by the Fascist regime was the “‘nationalization’ of civil society”.⁷ Despite its anticlerical character, the pre-Fascist liberal state had

⁶ See Serif Mardin, “Religion and Secularism in Turkey”, in Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (eds.), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Publishers, 1993), p.347.

⁷ My translation of “‘statalizzazione’ della società civile” [Francesco Traniello, “Dal Partito Popolare alla Democrazia Cristiana”, in Francesco Malgeri (ed.), *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana*, Vol.1

maintained a certain balance and distinction between monarchic institutions, parliamentary politics and civil society. Fascism gathered instead all the power in the state which, by pervading and weakening civil society, undermined the bottom-up channelling of societal demands on which the PPI had relied.⁸ Furthermore, the totalitarian character of the Fascist regime implied an ideologization of politics, characterized by the holistic and totalitarian pursuit of final ends.⁹ This aspect is particularly important as it conditioned the strategy adopted by the Church in response to the Fascist regime.

The Lateran Pacts, the agreements made between the Italian state and the Holy See in 1929, should indeed be seen as a compromise between the Church and the Fascist regime, through which the former attempted to contrast the ethical monopoly of the latter and maintain a direct control upon crucial sectors of civil society, such as the young generations.¹⁰ The Lateran Pacts consisted of three separate parts: the Treaty, the Concordat and the Financial Settlement. Through the Treaty, the Italian state acknowledged the creation of an independent Vatican city-state and the papal possession of several churches and palaces in Rome and in the rest of Italy. The Concordat assigned to Catholicism the status of only state religion and conferred to the Church several privileges in the fields of education, marriage law and taxation.¹¹ Above all, “[n]on-Catholic religions were relegated to inferior legal status and placed under certain restrictions. Priests were banned from party membership and political activity. The State was given the right to approve the appointment of bishops”.¹² Finally, the Financial Settlement was an indemnity given by the Italian state to the Vatican as a compensation for the loss of properties subsequent to unification.

Within the totalitarian framework imposed by the Fascist regime, partly endorsed by the Vatican and culminated with the ratification of the Lateran Pacts, the mediating function of a party of Catholic inspiration such as the PPI would have been of no use

(Rome: Edizioni Cinque Lune, 1987), p.188].

⁸ Ibid., p.188.

⁹ Ibid., p.188.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.189.

¹¹ Frederic Spotts and Theodor Wieser, *Italy: a Difficult Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.243.

¹² Ibid., p.243.

to the Church. For this reason the Vatican did not hesitate in abandoning the PPI to its destiny and embracing the Concordat strategy, in order to ensure for itself an at least partial sphere of influence upon Italian society. Despite several Fascist attacks the Church, through Catholic Action, managed to maintain its moral control over a large part of Italian society, especially a considerable section of the Italian youth, part of which would constitute, after the Second World War, the bulk of the DC leadership.¹³

The signing of the Lateran Pacts certainly represented a negative episode for the Italian Catholic movement as the Vatican had to accept the dismantling of all Catholic associations except Catholic Action.¹⁴ The Church only changed its attitude towards Fascism when it realized that it was not merely an authoritarian regime but also, and above all, a “secular religion”.¹⁵ Luigi Sturzo, from his exile, denounced “the exchange between the confessionalization of the State and the sacralization of an illiberal and pagan regime”.¹⁶ Indeed the Fascist regime, with its endeavour to build an all-encompassing ethical and pagan state, dominating every aspect of citizens’ life, was in principle incompatible with the Christian faith and aimed to use Catholic religion as an *instrumentum regni*.¹⁷

Despite this apparent irreconcilability, though, the anti-socialist, anti-liberal, anti-Jacobin and anti-Enlightenment character of the Fascist regime, essentially hostile to the principles and values asserted by the French Revolution, contributed in reducing the distance between the regime and the Church,¹⁸ which had not forgotten the humiliations suffered under the pre-Fascist liberal regime. Nevertheless, given the de facto existence of a single-party totalitarian regime, the Church had to renounce the

¹³ Lidia Menapace highlights however that, despite the contrast between Vatican and Fascism for the monopoly of the Italian youth, the Church, at least initially, did not issue a theoretical condemnation of Fascism [Lidia Menapace, *La Democrazia Cristiana: Natura, Struttura e Organizzazione* (Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1974), p.17].

¹⁴ Pietro Scoppola, *La Democrazia dei Cristiani* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2006), p.80.

¹⁵ My translation of “religione secolare” (ibid., p.82).

¹⁶ My translation of “lo scambio...tra la confessionalizzazione dello Stato e la sacralizzazione di un regime illiberale e pagano” (ibid., p.80).

¹⁷ Gabriele Gherardi (1967), *I Cattolici Cercano un Partito* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1967), pp.58-59. See also A.C. Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy: 1850-1950* (translated from the Italian by David Moore) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell: 1960), pp.187-190.

¹⁸ Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy: 1850-1950*, pp.191-192.

dream of controlling a party of Catholic inspiration such as the PPI, which was in principle non-confessional but in fact would have never opposed the Church hierarchy or the Pope.¹⁹

The Fascist regime conducted an offensive against Catholic Action in 1931, as it aimed to eliminate any organization hostile or extraneous to the regime itself.²⁰ This was followed by the passing of the racial laws in 1936, which openly contrasted with the Christian doctrine, although Italian Fascism never managed to acquire the same universal and holistic character of the Nazi regime.²¹ The end of the Fascist regime marked the emergence of a less anti-clerical attitude by non-Catholic forces, especially as a form of gratitude towards the Church for its important contribution to the Resistance. This aspect, together with the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the new Constitution (which I will assess in the next section), represented a favourable framework for the emergence of the Italian DC, which was founded in 1942 by Alcide De Gasperi and by other former members of the disbanded PPI, such as Mario Scelba, Attilio Piccioni and Giovanni Gronchi.

From a theoretical perspective, two major features of the Fascist regime represented a crucial shift from the pre-Fascist, liberal phase. First, Catholicism acquired institutional recognition through the Lateran Pacts. This helped in reducing the gap between political and religious spheres, and between the state and Catholic citizens. Second, this institutional recognition implied a greater subordination of the Vatican to the Fascist state. The latter, as I have highlighted, saw the Lateran pacts in purely pragmatic terms and conceived the Catholic Church, with its moral and mobilizational strength, as an *instrumentum regni*. This arrangement more closely resembles the one imposed by the Kemalist establishment in Turkey which, as explained in the previous chapter, has aimed to control religious expression within society and to use religious values for legitimizing its institutions and policies.

The formal separation between political and religious authorities in Italy certainly

¹⁹ Ibid. p.173.

²⁰ Ibid., p.251.

²¹ Ibid., p.261.

prevented the full subordination of religious matters to political power. Yet the authoritarian character of the Fascist regime and the banning of all political parties are certainly sufficient for grasping the absence of a normative and institutional space, within this framework, for religious parties. In this sense, Fascism is an expression of the monistic perfectionism that I extensively illustrated, and rejected, in the third chapter. It is therefore more useful to focus on the legacy that, more or less intentionally, the post-Fascist republican state inherited from Mussolini's regime.

The Inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the 1948 Constitution

It is important to assess the relationship between Fascist and post-war republican Italy regarding the institutional arrangement of church-state relations, in order to underline the elements of continuity between the two phases and, consequently, the influence that this continuity had on the DC. For this purpose, we should focus on the debate, conducted within the Constituent Assembly of the new Italian republic, about the inclusion of the 1929 Lateran Pacts within the new Constitution. Some parliamentarians, such as the Christian Democrat Giorgio La Pira, argued that the new juridical framework would have to respect and reflect the religious inclination of Italian society and that therefore the Pacts should have been included in the new Constitution.²² Others, such as the liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce, spoke against the inclusion. Croce especially highlighted how the Pacts had been agreed to by Mussolini only in order to enhance his prestige and tyranny.²³

A crucial contribution to this debate is, in my view, the position expressed by the Christian Socialist deputy Gerardo Bruni, as it raises interesting normative implications. According to Bruni, religious pluralism and freedom of conscience could not be guaranteed “where there is *State religion* or where there is a *State atheism*”.²⁴ Therefore, for Bruni, the only way to safeguard the Christian values which permeated the Italian nation would “not [be] by introducing laws which accord exemptions and privileges to the national Church, but by establishing a

²² Ibid., p.295.

²³ Ibid., pp.298-299.

²⁴ Gerardo Bruni, “Speech in the general debate on the draft Constitution”, 4-21 March 1947, quoted in Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy: 1850-1950*, p.294 (italics in original).

régime based on equality”.²⁵ In this way, he argued, the “spiritual physiognomy” of the Italian nation would not be preserved by the presence of a confessional state but rather “in virtue of the number and spirit of the majority of its members and of the democratic forms which permit and fully guarantee the public expression of religious sentiments”.²⁶ Consequently, according to Bruni, the inclusion of the Pacts into the new Constitution would prevent the presence of a truly democratic framework, jeopardizing both the free religious expression of the Catholic majority and the achievement of a regime of genuine religious pluralism.

Bruni’s speech clearly grasps some of the central issues characterizing not only the Italian situation after Fascism but, more generally, the normative problem of devising the most suitable institutional framework for the equal expression of religious groups and, indirectly, for the ideal presence of religious political parties. Bruni highlights one aspect that I emphasized in the sixth and seventh chapters of my thesis. I argued there that the model of pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation proposed by Modood and Kastoryano (similarly to the English model of religious establishment) provides the wrong answer to the problem of integrating religious groups into political life and does not represent a suitable institutional framework for the potential presence and flourishing of a plurality of religious political parties. Including one or even several churches into the institutional framework of a polity does not provide, I claimed, the common impartial framework that religious parties require in order to be able to preserve their bilingual agency and comply with the normative criteria of loyal opposition and regulated rivalry. I also argued that the NOCOP model proposed by Veit Bader, complemented by a pragmatist conception of democratic deliberation and centred on the normative agency of religious political parties, represents a better model for guaranteeing a viable balance between respect for the religious identity of a nation and equal treatment of different religious faiths. My version of NOCOP, centred on religious political parties, relies on the same normative arguments which underlie the institutional framework suggested by Bruni. The latter aimed to warrant state recognition of the religious (Catholic) identity of the majority of the Italian people

²⁵ Ibid., p.294.

²⁶ Ibid., p.294. For a similar argument, see also Gherardi, *I Cattolici Cercano un Partito*, p.59.

not by institutionalizing a set of privileges conferred to the Catholic Church but rather by guaranteeing the presence of a democratic deliberative space where Catholic citizens could convey their history, identity and values, also through a party of Catholic inspiration.

In NOCOP, I argued, religious claims are welcomed into the process of public deliberation, and the expansion of the legal, administrative and political spheres (the latter to be intended as the realm of ordinary politics) aims to provide an inclusive framework for both old and new religious demands. Equality is guaranteed by ensuring that all voices are heard. Identity, instead, may be preserved by the fact that majority religious groups can bring their collective history, values and tradition into the deliberative arena, therefore enhancing their stance before both other religious communities and non-religious citizens. A similar conception of church-state relations had also been at the basis of the political strategy of the PPI, forerunner of the DC. Indeed according to R. E. M. Irving, Luigi Sturzo, founder of the PPI, wanted “a society in which Christian principles and ideals predominated, but...believed that such a society could best be achieved in a free and democratic environment in which Catholic arguments would win the day on their merits”.²⁷ The PPI therefore endorsed a kind of institutional framework characterized by free and democratic deliberation, pluralism and religious non-establishment.

This approach clearly differed from the one that the DC would adopt after the Second World War, and which was evident in the speeches of those Christian Democrat members of the Constitutional Assembly who endorsed the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the new Constitution. The framework that they supported was characterized by a form of almost religious (monistic) establishment and by the consequent presence of a distorted (and not entirely democratic) deliberative arena in which Catholic citizens would inevitably be privileged over both non-religious citizens and believers of other faiths. The DC would therefore enjoy a special institutional advantage which, as I will show, would undermine any endeavour to abide by the normative criteria of religious party politics and preserve the party's

²⁷ R. E. M. Irving, *The Christian Democratic Parties of Western Europe* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), p.7.

bilingualism.

Indeed the Lateran Pacts were eventually incorporated into the new Constitution. According to the new juridical framework (which would have been modified only in 1984), the Catholic Church could fully administer Catholic marriages, priests could be admitted to public employment only upon the approval of their bishops and the state should provide religious primary and secondary instruction in Catholic form under Episcopal supervision.²⁸ These were the major privileges that the Catholic Church was granted by the Italian state. In truth, the new Constitution also guaranteed freedom for all religions and established that the institutional relations between the Italian state and non-Catholic religious faiths would have to be regulated through specific agreements. Despite the latter provision, the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the new Constitution determined the *de facto* establishment of a confessional state, characterized by a strong discrimination towards all non-Catholic minorities.²⁹ Indeed the first agreement between the Italian Republic and a non-Catholic religious organization (the Waldensian Church) was only ratified in 1984. The inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the new Constitution determined therefore a sort of continuity between Fascist and Republican Italy. Furthermore, also other features of the Fascist regime, namely the top-down control of societal demands, a heavily interventionist approach in economic matters and the imposition, from above, of a monistic worldview, had an influence upon the DC's ideology and on its tendency to conceive the party almost as a branch of the state.³⁰

The DC aimed, from its formation, to control the state and obtain electoral support among the bourgeoisie and the middle class, as well as among the Catholic masses.³¹ The power of the DC was grounded in the "entangling between party and State and between party and economic structures"³² and the DC was more a state-party than the genuine expression (from below) of the Catholic movement.³³ The establishment,

²⁸ Jemolo, *Church and State in Italy: 1850-1950*, p.309.

²⁹ Ibid., p.308.

³⁰ See Francesco Traniello, "Dal Partito Popolare alla Democrazia Cristiana", in Francesco Malgeri (ed.), *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana*, Vol.1 (Rome: Edizioni Cinque Lune, 1987), p.193.

³¹ Giuseppe Chiarante, *La Democrazia Cristiana* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1980), p.9.

³² My translation of "intreccio tra partito e Stato e tra partito e strutture economiche" (ibid., p.9).

³³ Ibid., p.25.

by DC Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani, of the Ministry of State Participation in 1956, was crucial in determining the symbiosis between party and state.³⁴ Arguably, the DC could even be considered a “cartel party”, i.e. one of those “colluding parties [that] become agents of the State and employ the resources of the State to ensure their own collective survival”,³⁵ thus undermining the crucial distinction between state institutions and civil society.³⁶ This contravened Fanfani’s own demand that the DC should transmit people’s demands to the legislative and executive powers, thus establishing a link between political realm and civil society.³⁷ The DC’s endeavour to maintain control of the state institutions was crucially influenced by the legacy of the Fascist regime’s emphasis on state interventionism in the social and economic spheres,³⁸ as well as by the Catholic Church’s resolve to bring “political discourse back to the level of the institutional highest authorities, ecclesiastical on the one hand, State on the other, in a direct dialogue which resumed the medieval formulas of the two powers”.³⁹

It should be clear, by now, that the DC, contrary to the AKP, never had to fight against an assertive secular or lay establishment preventing the formation of religious political parties. After Catholicism had officially been recognized in the new Constitution, the DC’s bilingual identity, unlike the AKP’s, was never threatened by the presence of a common institutional language opposing the bottom-up societal expression of religious claims or imposing the separation between religion and worldly affairs. Indeed, William Hale rightly highlights how, while Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe could openly place Christian values at the centre of their political proposal, “the need to stay within the secularist bounds imposed by the Turkish constitution...meant that the JDP [the English acronym of

³⁴ Frederic Spotts, and Theodor Wieser, (1986). *Italy: a Difficult Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.25.

³⁵ Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party”, *Party Politics*, Vol.1, No.1 (1995), p.5.

³⁶ André Krouwel, “Party Models”, in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: Sage, 2006), p.259.

³⁷ AA. VV., *I Congressi Nazionali della Democrazia Cristiana* (Roma, Spes, 1959), pp.557-560, quoted in Giorgio Galli, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 1978), p.167.

³⁸ Traniello, “Dal Partito Popolare alla Democrazia Cristiana”, p.193.

³⁹ My translation of “il discorso politico al livello dei vertici istituzionali, ecclesiastici da un lato, statali dall’altro, in un dialogo diretto che riesumava le formule medievali dei due poteri” (ibid., p.186).

the AKP] could not give an equal role to Islam in its public discourse”.⁴⁰

Yet the DC encountered a different set of problems. The party, that is, had to struggle in order to acquire full autonomy from the religious authority of the Church and foster therefore a specific religious partisan idiom, independent from the influence of the Vatican. Due to the almost confessional character of the post-Second World War institutional arrangement, and the consequent political and social weight regained by the Church, the DC found its political religious identity undermined by the presence of a competing, purely religious, authority which claimed to be the point of reference for all Catholics. In order to overcome this difficulty, the DC, like most Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe, initiated a process of “symbolic appropriation” by reinterpreting Catholicism in the sense of an abstract and universal set of Christian values, replacing the doctrinal narrowness of the former with the broad appeal of the latter and thus legitimizing its political identity, distinct from the religious identity of the Church.⁴¹ This process of symbolic appropriation contributed in uncoupling political Catholicism from the religious authority of the Vatican. It also provided the DC with a specific political identity, qualitatively different from the religious identity of expressed by Catholic movements and by the Catholic Church. The DC, as well as other Christian Democratic parties, “redefined the meaning of Catholicism for politics, increased their distance from the Church, and became autonomous political organizations”.⁴²

This process of gradual reinterpretation of religious values by no means implied their complete dismissal. Instead, it contributed in defining an original religious political identity, in which political and religious dimensions would become distinct but the ideal link between them would be preserved. While enjoying the advantages provided by the presence of a favourable constitutional arrangement, the DC always pursued a strategy of detachment from the Church, in order to define its own identity autonomously from the Vatican. Yet the DC enacted the process of symbolic

⁴⁰ William Hale, “Christian Democracy and the JDP: Parallels and Contrasts”, in M. Hakan Yavuz (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2006), p.75.

⁴¹ Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*, pp.244-247.

⁴² Ibid., p.25.

appropriation of Catholic values to an undue extent, thus reducing, rather than increasing, the distinctiveness of its own religious partisan identity. Therefore the DC partly contravened the normative criterion which requires political parties to preserve their particularistic idioms, thus jeopardizing its own bilingualism. This, together with the party's failure to criticize and reform the biased institutional regime of religious governance in Italy, provides the grounds for condemning the DC on the basis of the normative criteria of party politics.

The analysis conducted so far seems to confirm, once more, that the institutional establishment of one or more religious faiths from above, through their inclusion into a constitutional framework, does not represent the best or most inclusive model of church-state relations, not even when it also provides the juridical recognition of other faiths. The predominant status conferred to (a) specific religion(s) inevitably undermines the impartiality and inclusiveness of this ideal model and prevents the presence of a plurality of religious parties. This indirectly shows that a deliberative framework involving the political (non-constitutional) inclusion of all religious groups represents a better ideal arrangement, for guaranteeing religious pluralism and religious partisan identity, than the model of pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation proposed by Modood and Kastoryano,⁴³ as I argued in the seventh chapter.

The almost confessional framework in which the DC operated, and that the party never questioned, represented therefore an obstacle to the pluralistic deliberation which religious political parties can in principle convey. By complying with the normative criteria of party politics, religious political parties can play a very beneficial role within liberal democratic polities and provide "an affirmation of the democratic structure of civil authority and democratic procedures".⁴⁴ Participation in party politics might also have a formative effect upon religious citizens and religious

⁴³ Commenting on Jemolo's conclusion, Spotts and Wieser emphasize however that the fundamental factor of this confessional phase in Italian history "was less the juridical privileged position of the Church than what lay behind it: a nearly organic relationship between the Church and the Christian Democrats" (Spotts and Wieser, *Italy: A Difficult Democracy*, p.244).

⁴⁴ Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6 (2003), p.41.

groups, originating a process of “democratic acculturation”.⁴⁵ The DC (like its forerunner, the PPI) certainly helped Catholic principles and values, endorsed by a majority of the Italian population, to be integrated in the political life of the country in a way respectful of democracy. In line with the tradition of Western European Christian Democratic parties, the DC never advanced theocratic claims.

However, the incorporation of Catholicism into the constitutional framework of the Italian state since 1929 crucially undermined this process, reducing the institutional and political space for religious pluralism and, in principle, for the presence of a plurality of religious parties. The DC ought to have endorsed the institutional model of church-state relations invoked by Bruni. This would have guaranteed the state recognition of the religious (Catholic) identity of the majority of the Italian people not by institutionalizing a set of privileges conferred to the Catholic Church but by guaranteeing the presence of a democratic deliberative space where Catholic citizens could convey their history, identity and values, also through a party of Catholic inspiration. This would have also been more in line with the ideal NOCOP which best suits, in ideal terms, the presence of religious parties and would have allowed the DC to preserve its bilingualism.

Once the Lateran Pacts were included into the 1948 Constitution, the DC (unlike the AKP in Turkey) no longer had reasons to fight in order to guarantee a role for Catholic religious values in the public political realm as these had been recognized and fixed into the state framework. Neither did the DC have a reason for engaging in a pluralistic deliberation with non-Catholic religious faiths and, potentially, with religious political parties of non-Catholic inspiration. No other faith had been granted official recognition and, had any of them decided to engage in party politics, they would have had to operate within a very biased institutional and political framework, characterized by the presence of a state religion. The greater acceptance of pluralism and democracy, that participation in party politics can produce, was undermined in Italy by the establishment of a monistic regime of church-state relations. This defied the scope itself of religious partisan politics and resulted in the increasing

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.41.

identification of the DC with the state.

The Revision of the Concordat (1984)

The fourth phase of church-state relations in Italy (after pre-Fascist, Fascist and post-1948 ones) resulted from the revision of the Concordat in 1984 (the Treaty and the Financial Settlement remained unmodified). The new document, signed by Prime Minister Bettino Craxi and Vatican Secretary of State Agostino Casaroli, contained important and sometimes radical amendments to the original Concordat. Above all, it established that the Catholic Church would cease to be the state-supported religion of Italy and it would have to rely on voluntary donations for its survival.⁴⁶ It was only with the 1984 revision of the Concordat, therefore, that the monopoly of the Catholic Church was ended, or at least reduced, both at the institutional and juridical levels. This also contributed in undermining the political monopoly of the DC. In this connection, Ruggero Orfei highlights how the new Concordat constrained the DC to redefine its own political identity, by abandoning the mere tutelage of the Church interests and embracing, instead, a more difficult propositional role.⁴⁷ As the revised Concordat no longer defined Catholicism as the official religion of the Italian state, Orfei argues, the tight link between Catholic citizens, Vatican and DC was inevitably broken.⁴⁸

The new institutional arrangement introduced in 1984 offered, in principle, a better framework for the presence of a religious non-confessional party such as the DC. By reducing the institutional and constitutional weight of the Catholic religion, it provided a thinner and more democratic framework, suitable to the flourishing of religious party pluralism. This framework could have been embraced not only by the DC but, theoretically, also by other religious political parties, as it no longer contained the biased pro-Vatican provisions of the pre-1984 agreement. In other words, religious party bilingualism in Italy was in principle rendered more feasible by this new framework which provided an impartial, thinner common language, potentially more inclusive towards a plurality of religious partisan idioms. Indeed,

⁴⁶ Spotts and Wieser, *Italy: A Difficult Democracy*, pp.250-251.

⁴⁷ For a detailed summary of the content of the new Concordat, see Ruggero Orfei, *Gli Anni di Latta* (Genova: Marietti, 1998), p.46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.47.

due to the crisis that invested it during the 1980s, partly triggered by the revision of the Concordat, “the DC as a party revealed itself as ‘part’...defining itself as one among the possible political experiences of Christian inspiration. As part, it could no longer be what it was before, when it enjoyed Church investiture, albeit indirect”.⁴⁹

The DC, however, failed in the difficult task of redefining its role and its political proposal within the new institutional and political context.⁵⁰ Perhaps the reason for this was that the party had been for too long “a *hybrid fraction* (from the point of view of public law) of the institutions”⁵¹ and therefore “did not accept being a part”,⁵² preferring to remain “a national party”.⁵³ Despite the DC’s endorsement of democratic and parliamentary politics, in the party “there had remained a kind of creative ‘extraneousness’ to the most intimate spirit of democracy”.⁵⁴ The party gradually saw its power diminish until the party disbanded in 1993, under the political storm of Mani Pulite (Clean Hands), a nationwide judicial investigation into political corruption which involved most Italian political parties.

Two points, therefore, can be highlighted on the basis of my normative theory of religious political parties. First, the institutional regime of religious governance established in 1948 ought to have been challenged by the DC from the very beginning. The party ought to have endorsed the proposal put forward by Bruni during the debate in the Constitutional Assembly and rejected the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts into the new Italian constitution. This would have been more

⁴⁹ My translation of “[l]a DC come partito si scopriva ‘parte’...qualificandosi come una tra le possibili esperienze politiche di ispirazione cristiana. Come parte non poteva più essere quella di prima che godeva di un’investitura ecclesiastica, anche se indiretta” (ibid., p.161).

⁵⁰ See Guido Formigoni, *L’Italia dei Cattolici: Fede e Nazione dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), p.166.

⁵¹ My translation of “una *frazione ibrida* (dal punto di vista del diritto pubblico) delle istituzioni” (ibid., p.131, italics in original). See also G. Carocci, *Storia d’Italia dall’Unità ad Oggi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1975), p.322 quoted in Pietro Scoppola, *La Proposta Politica di De Gasperi* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1978), p.188.

⁵² My translation of “non si rassegnava ad esser parte” (Orfei, *Gli Anni di Latta*, p.146).

⁵³ My translation of “un partito nazionale” (ibid., p.146).

⁵⁴ My translation of “era rimasta una specie di ‘estraneità creativa’ allo spirito più intimo della democrazia” (ibid., p.157). However, Giorgio Campanini highlights how the absence of a religious party representative of Italian Catholics, and respecting the rules of the democratic game, may contribute to the reemergence of an authoritarian tendency among Catholics [Giorgio Campanini, “Il Significato della Democrazia Cristiana nel Sistema Politico Italiano”, in Emiel Lamberts (ed.), *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945-1995), Proceedings of the Leuven Colloquium, 15-18 November 1995* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), p.281].

consistent with the normative criteria of religious party politics and would have allowed the DC to preserve its bilingualism rather than being absorbed into the state framework and become an almost cartel party. The party's inability to perform this task even after the 1984 changes to the Concordat was partly the result of its almost irreversible entanglement with the Italian state. Second, and relatedly, the DC ought to have accepted to be only a "part" within the Italian political landscape. Therefore it also ought to have preserved a clearer particularistic idiom, rather than pursuing a "catch-all" strategy in order to reach a broader and interclass constituency and preserve its monopolistic control of the state apparatus.

Conclusion

Compared to the AKP, the DC displayed a lesser degree of compliance with the normative criteria of party politics. Certainly this does not mean that the party should have been banned. The DC always maintained, at least formally, loyal opposition, respect for party pluralism and use of legal means to achieve and preserve its power. Yet, as I explained in the first chapter, parties also ought to preserve a distinct idiom able to distinguish them from other parties. They therefore ought to avoid becoming "cartel" or "catch-all" parties as this would prevent them from fully performing their role of bilingual channels placed between civil society and the state. The DC, while never abandoning the religious grounds of its political platform, gradually broadened its ideology and eventually became entangled with the state apparatus. This prevented it from preserving its bilingualism and providing a greater contribution to the democratic life of the Italian republic. Furthermore, the DC accepted a biased regime of religious establishment which precluded, in ideal terms, religious pluralism and the potential presence of a plurality of religious parties. This analysis helps us to conclude that the DC in Italy played a less valuable role than the AKP played in Turkey. The party did not contribute enough in providing those benefits which religious political parties can produce within liberal democratic polities, when they comply with the normative criteria of religious party politics that I have presented in this thesis. It soon stopped being a bottom-up channel of religious and other societal demands, and became instead an appendix of the state.

Conclusion

Through my analysis of the AKP in Turkey and the DC in Italy, conducted in the final section of my thesis, I attempted to highlight the implications that my normative theory of religious parties might have when contextualized in real world terms. I showed that religious parties can be good for enhancing liberal democracy when they comply with the normative criteria of party politics that I presented in the first chapter, and that the AKP has played a more valuable role, in this sense, than the DC played in Italy until its demise. This analysis confirms that a normative theory of political parties, and of religious parties more specifically, may help to address some of the crucial issues which the agency of political parties often raises in the real world. It is only by having such a theory, I believe, that it might be possible to assess, for example, whether parties of religious inspiration (such as the AKP in Turkey) ought to legitimately be banned or whether, for example, a party such as the DC in Italy ought to have been reformed. My analysis has also provided normative grounds for accepting or rejecting specific ideal models of religious governance on the basis of their degree of inclusiveness towards religious claims and parties. These are not, I believe, abstract and elusive questions, confined to the intangible realm of theoretical research, but issues which, while necessarily grounded in a normative analysis, bear significant implications in the concrete domain of everyday politics and policy-making.

Yet in the introduction I also raised questions of a more purely normative character, i.e. whether religious parties are not especially likely to become hegemonic and whether religious instances should be allowed into the public political realm of liberal democratic politics, e.g. via religious political parties. Does my account of religious political parties contribute in defying the diffidence and concerns of those advocates of an expansive idea of public reason, who would rather keep religious comprehensive doctrines outside the public political realm? Is there not an ongoing threat, they might ask, that religious political parties, if allowed within a democratic polity, might in fact abuse their democratically gained power and establish an authoritarian, theocratic regime? How does my account respond to these concerns?

Conclusion

My analysis in the fourth chapter, illustrating the implications of the normative criteria of party politics for establishing the legitimate limits of partisan advocacy, partly helps to answer these questions. There is no way, I argued, to foresee whether an apparently democratic party will become undemocratic once in power. Yet a normative political theorist must attempt to establish on what grounds we can say that this shift is wrong and ought to be contrasted. My normative analysis, therefore, aimed to justify those measures (e.g. constitutional checks, police state, army intervention etc.) suited to face undemocratic and hegemonic challenges once these arise or to prevent them, where possible. The only normatively grounded limits to partisan advocacy, I argued, come from within party politics.

Religious political parties which comply with the normative criteria of party politics can provide both normative and institutional tools for ensuring the feasibility of an inclusive public deliberation while guaranteeing that religious citizens maintain a self-critical attitude, open to argumentative challenges. Rawls's theory (like all those theories which invoke expansive public reason constraints) tends to exclude too many comprehensive doctrines (including religious ones) from the public political realm, as well as those parties (e.g. religious ones) which convey them. This, I argued in the second chapter, also renders it self-defeating, by obstructing the process by which people endorsing unreasonable (i.e. in Rawls's terms) comprehensive doctrines may come into line with the overlapping consensus, and thus contribute to the self-reinforcement of political liberalism. A model of pragmatic deliberative democracy, although more inclusive and theoretically sounder than Rawls's (for the reasons that I illustrated in the sixth chapter), still requires political parties, including religious ones, in order to warrant citizens' commitment to democratic deliberation and respect of pluralism. For the same reasons, while endorsing Bader's NOCOP as the most suitable framework for allowing the presence of religious parties, I argued that such a model could not effectively be sustained (both normatively and institutionally) without granting a central role to religious parties.

Yet, as well as appealing to the ideal conception of political parties that I endorsed in

the first chapter, there are also other reasons why religious parties should be welcomed within democratic polities, instead of being seen as potential authoritarian threats. First, well into the twentieth century, many (probably most) authoritarian regimes have arisen from deeply secular (rather than religious) doctrines. Nazism, Fascism and Communism, which I examined in the third chapter, established totalitarian polities whose political and philosophical foundations were non-religious or even anti-religious. Nazism and Communism especially were clear examples of “secular fundamentalisms”,¹ appealing to “illegitimate scientocracy or expertocracy”.² Also Turkey’s Kemalist regime could have been considered, until recently (i.e. paradoxically, until the emergence and success of Islamist parties), a form of secular fundamentalism.

However, nationalist, communist and secular anti-religious parties (which could potentially lead to analogous authoritarian outcomes) have continued to be allowed in most Western democratic polities. This confirms both that secular ideologies are as likely as religious ones to give birth to totalitarian and undemocratic regimes and that, nonetheless, they have regularly been admitted into the public political realm of Western democratic polities, via political parties. There is therefore no reason, or evidence, to believe that religious doctrines might more easily or inevitably lead to authoritarian outcomes than secular ones.³ Therefore, as the latter are normally allowed into the public political realm, there is no reason for excluding the former. All that matters, it seems, is that those parties which convey comprehensive doctrines into the public political sphere (both religious and non-religious) comply with the normative criteria of party politics, and that the necessary measures (e.g. constitutional checks, police state, army intervention etc.) are in place for preventing authoritarian outcomes. Most importantly, though, these measures ought to be justified on the basis of the ideal conception of parties that I provided in the first and fourth chapters, not on the grounds, for example, of strict public reason constraints.

¹ Veit Bader, “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?”, *Political Theory*, Vol.27, No.5, October (1999), p.612.

² Ibid., p.614.

³ There is indeed evidence that appeal to religious intolerance by political candidates in newly democratic polities has been less successful than expected. See Marc F. Plattner, “Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One Without the Other”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77, No.2 (1998), pp.178-179.

Second, and connectedly with the previous point, the widely accepted presence of non-religious parties conveying secular comprehensive doctrines (liberal, communist conservative etc.) in Western liberal democratic polities also helps to answer the critique, raised by advocates of strict public reason constraints, that religious doctrines are idiosyncratic and therefore not suitable for public political debate. As I explained in the seventh chapter, political debate in contemporary Western societies is already “multilingual” and has been able so far to accommodate the instances of communists, conservatives, liberals etc.⁴ Therefore, an inclusive public political sphere already exists in these polities. As this has been able to admit so many distinctive and not less idiosyncratic comprehensive idioms, there is no reason to believe that it could not admit religious doctrines as well. I tried to endorse this view through my analysis of epistemological holism conducted in the sixth chapter. Furthermore, we should never forget that religious doctrines (like any other comprehensive doctrine) acquire an essentially new meaning when conveyed by political parties which abide by the normative criteria of party politics. They lose any radical, intolerant or uncompromising feature which they might have at the pre-political and pre-partisan levels. Moreover, as I suggested in the seventh chapter, religious political parties help to render religious arguments accessible to non-religious citizens, by linking them to specific policy matters which all citizens are likely to be familiar with (e.g. abortion, public funding of religious schools etc.).

Third, due to the reasons just mentioned, religious parties have in fact already been allowed in most if not all Western liberal democratic polities, quite often in the form of Christian Democratic parties. These polities have understood that religious political parties can in fact contribute to the democratization of religious instances and to a dialectic of institutionalization which may prevent religious fundamentalism as “[r]eligions who vie for public money and want to exert political influence have to accept that polities vice versa exert influence upon them”.⁵ Religious faiths might undergo a process of moderation when engaged in multi-party democracy, as the cases of the AKP and the DC show.

⁴ Bhikhu Parekh, “The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse”, in Leroy S. Rouser (ed.), *Religion, Politics and Peace* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p.74.

⁵ Veit Bader, “Religion and States: A New Typology and Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol.6, No.1, March (2003b), p.77.

Finally, rather than giving birth to undemocratic and authoritarian regimes, religious faiths have in fact often contributed to the development of emancipatory movements.⁶ Rawls himself, I showed in the second chapter, refers to the example of the abolitionists and of the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States, in which Christian values played a crucial role.⁷ We should also remember the prominent role of many Catholic priests during the Italian Resistance against Fascism and, more recently, the 2007 Burmese anti-government pro-democracy protests, led by the Burmese Buddhist monks.⁸

Even the rise of Islamist parties in Turkey, which I extensively examined in the tenth chapter, has contributed to the gradual democratization of Turkey's political and party system. The AKP's plea for a more inclusive and democratic public political realm, in this sense, might help to render the latter more permeable to comprehensive values (e.g. religious, ethnic etc.). I hope that these arguments, which I have already considered at various points throughout my thesis, may provide an answer to the sceptical advocate of an exclusivist public reason, and therefore justify the expediency of allowing religious political parties into the public political realm of liberal democratic polities.

There are still many other questions, though, that I have lacked space to address in this work. By focusing on religious political parties, I only examined one typology of comprehensive conceptions of the good that parties may convey into the political realm (i.e. religious views). Although religious parties provide, as I argued, a paradigmatic example of the perfectionist character of partisan agency, there are many other values, or sets of values, which parties may convey into the political sphere. Besides religious parties, indeed, we also find other typologies of parties, such as green, social democratic, communist, nationalist or separatist ones.

The issues that I have just briefly illustrated are crucial for a more exhaustive

⁶ Parekh, "The Voice of Religion in Political Discourse", pp.70-71.

⁷ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Expanded Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005a), p.251.

⁸ BBC News, "Monks lead largest Burma protest", 24 September 2007. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7009825.stm> [accessed 20 January 2009].

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theoretical understanding of political parties as such. Yet I believe that focusing on specifically one kind of parties, namely religious ones, does not detract from the significance of my findings but rather provides the stimulus for further inquiry. Here I defined the normative framework for an account of political parties in general, and then focused on one of many possible typologies of political parties to show some of the potential implications of my theory for the analysis of more concrete issues. My hope is that the general theory may also be applied to other kinds of parties and that, while displaying its own soundness, it may also be enriched by the findings that this further research may produce.

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